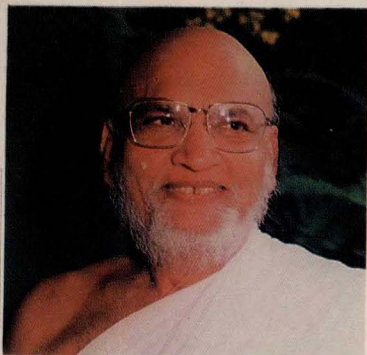


The background of the cover is a photograph of a Jain temple's interior. It features a series of ornate, dark-colored arches that create a sense of depth, leading the eye towards a bright, green tree visible through the farthest arch. The architecture is highly detailed with carvings and patterns.

JAIN RAMAYAN

PART 1

Shri Priyadarshan



શ્રીયુત સંપતરાજ સ વિશ્વકલ્યાણ મહે

Shri Mulchandbhai who was born on the 4th August 1933 as the fifth son of Manibhai and Hirabahan, in Pudgam, Mehsana, (Gujarat) grew smiling and blooming like a tender and fragrant Jasmine bud. At the age of eighteen, he received the *DEEKSHA* on 21-3-51 at the feet of the famous Jain **Acharya Shrimad Vijay Premsoorishwarji Maharaj**, at Ranpur (Saurashtra) as the disciple of Bhanuvijayji who is at present **Acharya Shri Vijay Bhuvanbhanusoorishwarji Maharaj**.

Muni Shri Bhadruguptavijayji, from the time of his initiation into the *CHARITRA DHARMA*, has been carrying out very deep and continued studies of the scriptures and he has also been carrying out the duties of preaching the scriptures. He mastered the 45 *Jain Agamas*, with their commentaries; and then step by step, he mastered all the philosophical systems of India and of the Western countries. He also studied and mastered the various great literatures of the world, and he has been travelling towards new horizons of knowledge and creation.

His pilgrimage of creative writing which began at the age of twenty with the book "*MAHAPANTHNO YATRI*" (in Gujarati) has been continuing even today without a break. He has written more than one hundred books. He has produced various kinds of valuable literature such as critical and scholarly commentaries on such great philosophical works as *JNANSAR* and *PRASHAMARATI* besides works on philosophy, long stories, short stories, poems, songs, epistles and the *JAIN RAMAYAN*. He has been producing literature which provides pure and wholesome spiritual guidance to his readers, especially to the younger generation.

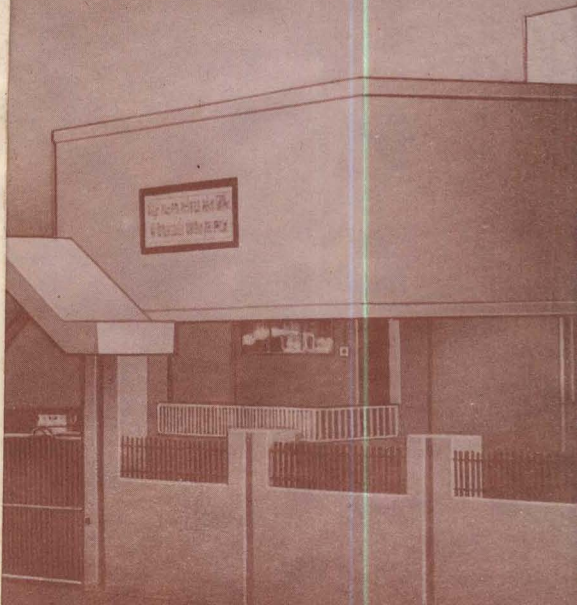
His creative writings are being published in Gujarati, Hindi and English and in the Hindi monthly magazine *ARIHANT*, all published by Shri Vishwakalyan Prakashan Trust of Mehsana.

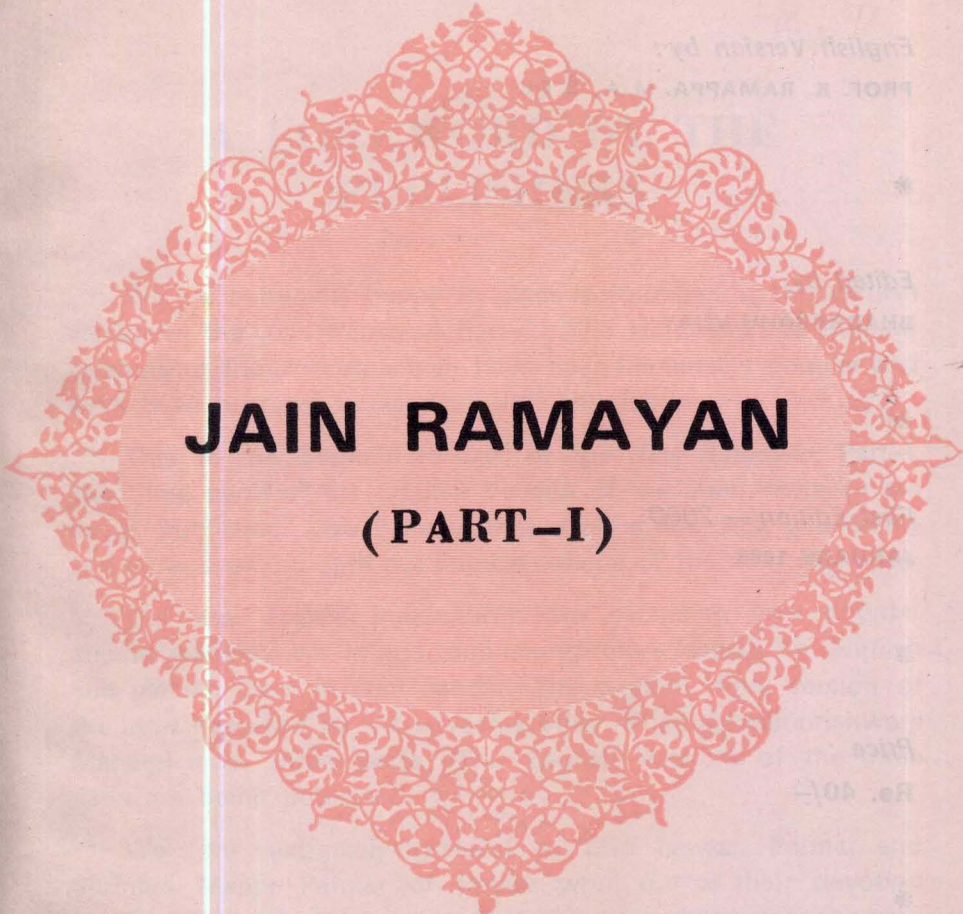
He is of a loving nature, always smiling, serene and sublime in his utterances. His soft and tender nature has endeared himself to countless people whose spiritual welfare is his only aim. The most important aspect of his personality is his never-failing endeavour to bring spiritual welfare and felicity to all. He is deeply interested in providing guidance for the improvement of the society especially the younger generation and children with respect to their way of life.

He has travelled on foot through Gujarat, Rajasthan, Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra, Andhra, Tamil Nadu, Karnataka etc., and wherever he went, he carried out activities to disseminate the *DHARMA* and to inculcate lofty cultural ideals in the minds of his devotees.

His personality has grown lofty and resplendent on account of such sublime activities as delivering discourses, engaging in enlightening conversations, organising cultural programmes, carrying out meditation, recitation and austerities and rendering devotion to the *Paramatma*. He is a person of exemplary and inspiring virtues whose very appearance can bring about spiritual elevation in the beholders.

He was elevated to the status of an **Acharya** on 4th May 1987 at Kolhapur (Maharashtra) by his beneficent Gurudev Acharyashri Vijay Bhuvanbhanusoorishwarji Maharaj; and he came to be known as **Acharyashri Vijay Bhadruguptsoorishwarji Maharaj**.





JAIN RAMAYAN

(PART-I)

(A long novel based on *The Trishashtishalaka Purusha Charitra* written by Kalikalsarvajna Acharyashri Hemachandrasoorishwarji, in the Twelfth century of the Vikram era.)

Written by :

Shri Priyadarshan

(Acharyashri Vijay Bhadruguptsoorishwarji Maharaj)

English Version by :

PROF. K. RAMAPPA, M. A., B. Ed.

Edited by :

BHADRABAHU VIJAY

First Edition — 2000

JANUARY 1989

Price :

Rs. 40/-

Published by :

SHRI VISHVAKALYAN PRAKASHAN TRUST

NEAR KAMBOINAGAR,

MEHSANA-384 002. (GUJARAT) INDIA

Printed at :

HARSHA PRINTERY

122, DR. MEISHERI ROAD.

BOMBAY-400 009.

A FOREWORD BY THE PUBLISHERS

We are extremely happy to place in your hands, the English version of the *Jain Ramayan* Part-I. The Hindi and the Gujarati versions of the *Jain Ramayan* have been immensely popular and have been received by readers with enthusiasm.

This is the English version of the *Jain Ramayan* Part-I. The three parts of the English Version of the *Jain Ramayan* are being published. We believe that ours is the first excellently and attractively brought out English version of the *Jain Ramayan*.

Our other English publications are becoming very popular among readers. We intend publishing more works in English and placing them in your hands. The original Hindi version of the *Jain Ramayan* by Acharyashri Vijay Bhadruguptsoorishwarji Maharaj is in three parts. The English versions of the three parts are being published.

We are extremely grateful to Shri Ishwar Parmar and Shrimati Manju Parmar of Poona who, out of their devotion for the Revered Acharyadev Shri Vijay Bhadruguptsoorishwarji Maharaj, have extended financial assistance to publish these English versions.

We are extremely thankful to Mr. Rajendra Bothra (Manish Silk Industries, Bangalore) for supplying us a neat and clean-typescript of all the 3 parts of the '*Jain Ramayan*'.

We also wish to express our gratitude to Mr. Keshavjibhai Gogri of Harsha Printery for printing these books in an attractive manner.

Our heartfelt desire is that these books should be made available to readers in all educational institutions, libraries and public libraries. For hundreds and thousands of years, the sublime ideals exemplified by the characters of the *Ramayan* have

been the foundation for our Indian Culture. Even in this age of materialism, the impact of the *Ramayan* on the minds and hearts of people is profound and lasting.

The *Ramayan* may not be considered historically true by some but no one can deny its greatness as a magnificent epic poem embodying some eternal, ethical and spiritual truths.

Of course, the *Jain Ramayan* has not been so popular as the *Valmiki Ramayan*, the *Tulsi Ramayan*, etc., but the original *grantha Trishashtishalaka Purush Charitra* on which the *Jain Ramayan* is based is an ancient one.

We hope that you will enjoy reading this book as you have enjoyed reading our other publications.

Our heartfelt desire is that you must read this book; and you must encourage your friends and relatives to read it. This book can also be given as a presentation on auspicious occasions to your friends and relatives.

January, 1989

Shri Vishwakalyan Prakashan Trust.
Mehsana

A FOREWORD BY THE AUTHOR

This is an English version of my work, the *Jain Ramayan* Part-I. This work is in the form of a long novel based on the story in the famous work, "*Trishashtishalaka Purusha Charitra*" written by Kalikalsarvajna Acharyashri Hemachandrasoori in the twelfth century of the Vikram era. The *Trishashtishalaka Purusha Charitra* contains certain details which are not to be found in such epics as the *Valmiki Ramayan* and the *Ramacharit-manas* of Tulsidas.

The *Jain Ramayan* comprises a detailed account of Ravan's birth, his youth and his attainments; many thrilling and exciting events and stories relating to the Rakshasdweep (the island of the Rakshasas) and the Vanardweep; (the island of the Vanaras) and the profoundly moving story of Anjanadevi, the mother of Hanuman. It also contains the stories of Shri Ram's ancestors, Emperor Dasharath's conquest of Magadha and many stirring events relating to Shri Ram's departure to forests.

The various characters of the *Ramayan*, and the sublime ideals that the great work embodies touch many aspects of the human state of existence. If people read the *Ramayan* with the purpose of attaining spiritual elevation and ethical excellence the great epic provides the necessary spiritual and ethical guidance to them. The *Ramayan* enables its readers to attain such sublime virtues as heroism, fortitude, patience, selflessness, spiritual excellence, chastity, purity, nobility, dutifulness and spiritual equanimity; and bestows upon them genuine elicity and serenity.

Normally, a story narrated in an interesting manner fascinates readers and exercises upon them a deeper impact than philosophical or didactic works. All, whether they are young or old, enjoy stories. Each story produces upon its readers, its own impression. Now-a-days, thousands of stories and works of fiction which provoke sinful propensities and which destroy and

undermine the sublime values of human life are being published. Such books enter every household and people read them with zest and interest. The ignoble impact of such books can be seen in the lives of individuals, in social life and in our national life.

The *Ramayan* is so sublime that it cannot fail to produce a noble and elevating effect on its readers. Such lofty virtues as renunciation, purity, nobility, non-violence, truthfulness, celibacy and disinterestedness appear in the readers of The *Ramayan* at least to some extent. No reader of the *Ramayan* can escape its elevating impact.

I have written this novel with the purpose of communicating to my readers the noble ideals that the *Jain Ramayan* embodies. I have not attempted to preach any precept directly. Whatever is to be said, is said by the characters themselves or is implied in the events. I have only made a humble effort to narrate the story of the *Ramayan* in such a way as to make it interesting to readers and to enable them to appreciate its greatness.

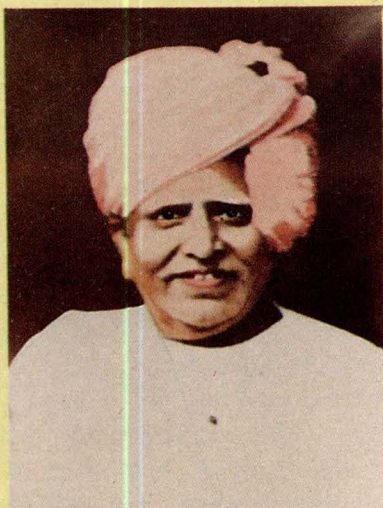
The *Jain Ramayan* written by me has been published in Gujarati and Hindi, are very popular.

Now, this English version of the *Jain Ramayan* has been published for those readers who know English. Prof. K. Ramappa, who has been translating my books has prepared this English version of the *Jain Ramayan*.

This book has been published with the valuable financial assistance of Shri Ishwar Parmar and Shrimati Manju Parmar of Poona. Their precious contribution deserves my heartfelt appreciation.

If this work can awaken in the readers their dormant and latent virtues and if it can provide them some spiritual light, I will consider that my efforts have been fruitful.

—PRIYADARSHAN

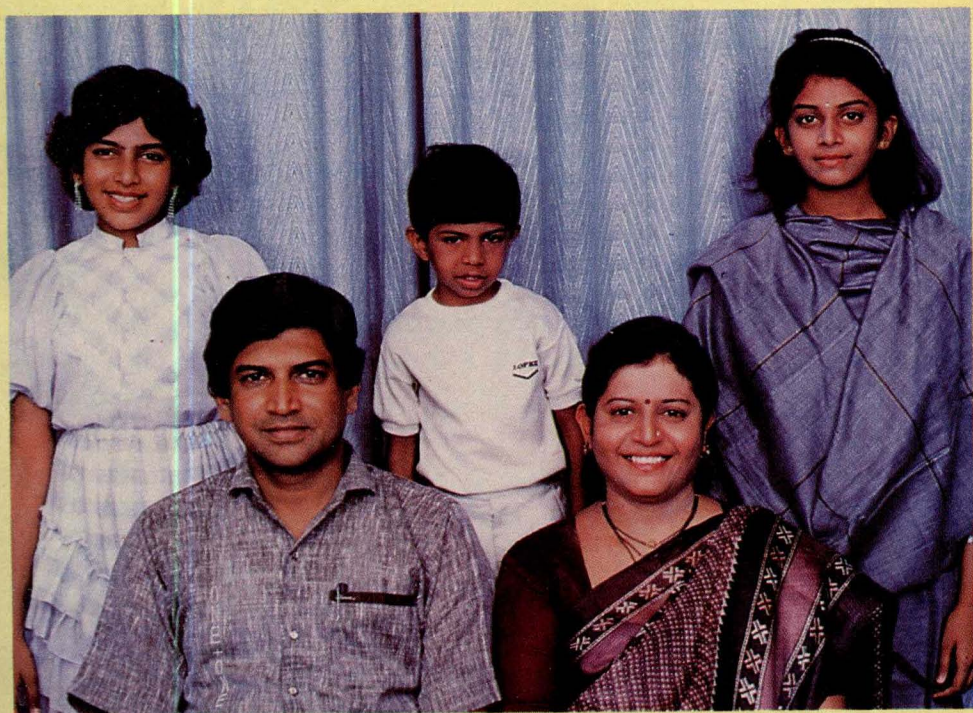


Late Shri Chandulaji
Tarachandji Parmar



Lat Smt. Champaben
Chandulaji Parmar

Mohabbatnagar (Raj.) Pune



Ishwar Parmar, Manjula Parmar
Pritee • Darshna • Sanat Parmar

Ishwar Construction, Pune

A FOREWORD BY THE TRANSLATOR

This is an English version prepared by me of the *Jain Ramayan* Part-I. It is a translation of the Hindi version written by Acharyashri Vijay Bhadruguptsoorishwarji Maharaj. The Hindi version is in three parts. The English versions of the second part and the third part will be published soon.

Acharyashri Vijay Bhadruguptsoorishwarji Maharaj is a scriptural scholar of outstanding eminence. Besides being a scholar, he is a creative writer of rare gifts; and an excellent exponent of the scriptures. He is also an engaging narrator of stories as it is evident from the various books he has written. He has the remarkable gifts of inventing interesting sequences, and writing realistic dialogues.

I have translated the *Jain Ramayan* into English in accordance with the sacred wish of the great Gurudev and as desired by Shri Vishwakalyan Prakashan Trust. I thank them for choosing me to render the book into English.

If there are any defects in my rendering the work into English, I hope that the readers of the book will treat them in the manner of the legendary swan which receives milk after separating it from water.

Bangalore,
January 1989.

—K. RAMAPPA.



I

THE RAKSHASDWEEP : THE VANARDWEEP

This profoundly interesting incident took place, in those days when the commands of the Supreme Lord Ajitnath, the second Tirthankar, held their sway, far and near. Mother Earth smiled joyously with prosperity, felicity and splendour. Absolute serenity and felicity prevailed everywhere. On the earth, there was a beautiful and charming island which was famous as the Rakshasdweep. Lanka was its capital. The great city which was fascinating and dignified was renowned everywhere. It was extremely beautiful, and fascinating. A king by name Meghavahan was ruling over the country.

The line of Rakshasas originated from Meghavahan. Though his line became famous as the Rakshasa dynasty, King Meghavahan was, indeed, extremely benevolent, kind, gracious, sociable and courteous. In respect of his exalted character, he was incomparable and his greatness was indescribable.

Once, it so happened that King Meghavahan sat at the window of the upper storey of his magnificent mansion enjoying the glories and graces of nature. Sometimes, his eyes ranged upto the boundaries of the earth as if to play; and sometimes, they were fixed intently at the immense sky as if to explore its hidden mysteries; and to probe its deepest secrets. Thus, he contemplated on the extraordinary objects and aspects of the universe for a few moments and enjoyed the sublimity of those sights to his heart's content; and then, closed his eyes.

All of a sudden, he fell into a state of self-scrutiny; and began to contemplate on himself inwardly. He thought, "Oh ! Just as the sky and the universe are immense and boundless; just as they do not have any limits or boundaries, the pilgrimage of my my wanderings through the *Samsar* has been endless; and it has been going on from times immemorial. I do not know when these aimless driftings may end; and when I may attain salvation".

The King was completely lost in these contemplations; and he ceased to have any interest in his wealth, worldly possessions, Kingdom and his throne of royal state. The fetters of infatuation, illusion and attachment in which he was bound broke off in a moment. The King who had been ensnared in attachments became totally detached in a moment. He renounced his limitless royal grandeur, his magnificent palace and his incomparable wealth and worldly possessions, and decided to spend the remainder of his life at the sacred feet of a noble spiritual head.

At once, he sent for his son, the heir-designate to the throne; and said in a calm and composed voice; "Dear son ! From to-day onwards, you will be the lord of the Kingdom, the throne and the wealth". King Meghavahan said in a composed and dignified manner.

The amazement of the prince, on hearing this, knew no bounds. The Prince, the Chief Minister, the Commander-in-Chief, the lords and the state officials were all amazed at this unexpected decision of the King; and were, at sea, unable to see what they should do at this juncture. The Prince said in a voice choked with emotion, "Honoured and beloved father ! You ?" "Yes ! My dear son, I have decided to renounce my Kingdom and Kingship. My responsibility to administer and rule over the Kingdom ends to-day. The time has come when I should bestow my attention on my soul and should seek my spiritual welfare and progress. You need not at all be grieved by this decision of mine even to the least extent. I am perfectly happy and satisfied; and I am fully confident that you will

carry out the traditions of our noble line, ruling over the country with ability and nobility; and that you will discharge your responsibilities efficiently”.

The tears flowed from the eyes of the prince, Maharaksha. His throat was choked; and his lips quivered. He stood stupefied by his loving father's decision to renounce worldly life and was deeply grieved by the prospect of the impending separation from him who was the embodiment of sweet tenderness. But the heroic son of Meghavahan, the mighty hero displayed his unexampled patience and strength of mind.

The prince thought, “If I place impediments on my father's way; if I hold his feet; and entreat him to alter his decision, it is likely that he gives up his determination to renounce this worldly life. But can I really prevent him from pursuing the path of renunciation? What is my ability compared to the stern master, Time? What am I but a weak creature compared to his invincible might! I am but a dry blade of grass before his determination which stands stolid and unshakeable like the *Meru*. Yet, how can I allow him to go away? Even after a hundred years, sugar remains sweet! No! No! I will not allow him to go away from me!” The wheel of thoughts kept revolving furiously in the mind of the prince. He was caught in a whirlpool of conflicting thoughts and emotions.

Again, he was immersed in deep reflections. “If I place impediments on the path dear to him, his tender heart might be wounded. If he is thus grieved, his grief may become boundless. He cannot even look at me, afterwards, with a calm mind. Shall I keep off his chosen path? Yes. Only that is proper”.

The prince, Maharaksha, bowed his head to his father in all humility and veneration; and agreed to abide by his decision.

The heroic King Meghavahan sought the spiritual refuge of Bhagwan Ajitnath; and became a *Shraman*, after receiving from him, initiation into the *Sadhudharma*.

Meghavahan who renounced Kingship and turned a *Shraman* became deeply absorbed in severe austerities and a

profound meditation. He was always eager and ready to carry out every command of the Bhagwan. In course of time, Muni Meghavahan destroyed all his evil *Karmas* by means of spiritual austerities and pursuits; became a traveller of incomparable spiritual excellence, on the path of salvation; and ended his earthly journey.

The soul of Meghavahan became *Siddha* (absolutely perfect).

Now, there was no fear of a rebirth; no fear of old age; nor was there any fear of decay or death. He attained to the sublime state of everlasting felicity, serenity and infinite knowledge.

Maharaksha carried out the administration of Lanka with a lofty feeling of dedication, for a long time. His administration of the Kingdom became more and more efficient and beneficent. When the proper time approached, he too decided to discard the illusion of the *Samsar*. He placed his son, Devaraksha on the throne, and began to pursue the path of spiritual elevation and purification.

In this manner, every King who ascended the throne of Lanka handed over the Kingdom to his son; became a *Shraman*; carried out stern spiritual austerities and attained spiritual perfection. In a way, this became an honoured tradition of the royal line of Lanka.

The cycle of *Samsar* kept revolving. Seasons came and went in their due order. Summer was followed by the rainy season; the rainy season was followed by winter; and again there came summer; thus the wheel of time kept moving endlessly, day after day, month after month, season after season; and year after year.

After the age of Lord Ajitnath, the ages of Lord Sambhavnath, Lord Abhinandan Swami, Lord Sumatinath, Lord Padmaprabha Swami, Lord Suparshwanath, Lord Chandraprabha Swami, Lord Suvidhinath and Lord Shitalnath passed.

In course of time, there came the age of the eleventh Tirthankar, Lord Shreyansnath Swami.

(2)

The lofty mountain, Vaithadhya stretched from horizon to horizon, with its ranges rising tier over tier, with countless caves and abundant groves of trees. Actually, it was the Kingdom of Vidyadhars, a race of celestial beings, strangely fascinating, splendid to look at with its sinuous streams, gurgling torrents, sky-high peaks and pellucid lakes.

Among those mountains lay the city of Meghpur, a fascinating city of topless towers, the abode of prosperity and felicity. Athindra Vidhyadhar ruled over the Kingdom. Besides possessing a mastery over the fine arts, he was a genius of exceptional intellectual brilliance and was the supreme commander of a vast army of heroic soldiers. Moreover, he was the greatest hero of them all. His fame echoed from every part and particle of Vaithadhya. No Vidyadhar had been born in the world who was comparable to him in military heroism and intellectual brilliance and incisiveness.

Shrimathi was his Queen-consort. Besides being incomparably beautiful, she was the embodiment of chastity and nobility. In course of time, the Queen gave birth to two children, a son and a daughter.

The son was named Shrikanta.

The daughter was called Devi.

Devi, as suggested by her name was an angel in beauty and in virtues. She was supremely beautiful combining in herself the rarest of graces and glories.

When Devi stepped on the threshold of youth, every organ of her divinely graceful body began to bubble with buoyant beauty and charm. Her beauty beamed and bloomed with the radiance of the sixteen arts. The fame of her extraordinary beauty spread far and near. One day, a certain ambassador appeared in the court of Athindra Vidyadhar. He had been sent by Pushpottar Vidyadhar, the emperor of Ratanupur.

He bowed to Athindra Vidyadhar respectfully, and presented to him the precious gifts he had brought with him. Athindra received the presentations joyfully; and asked him,

“Dear ambassador ! what message have you brought ?”

“Your Excellency ! Pushpottar Vidyadhar, the emperor of Ratnapur has sent me to you”.

“What is the purpose of your visit ?”

“Your Excellency ! Our emperor has a son by name Padmottar who is radiant like the sun. He is a master of many arts and accomplishments; and he is also a hero of remarkable valour. If you are gracious enough to give your beautiful daughter in marriage to our prince, two noble and heroic royal families would be bound by the bondage of amity and cordiality”.

On hearing the message thus delivered to him, Athindra Vidyadhar fell into deep thoughtfulness for a few moments. Having been silent for a few moments, he spoke with a calm voice : “Very good. We will surely think about it”.

After the messenger went away, Athindra Vidyadhar began searching for a suitable bridegroom for his daughter, Devi. He put an end to all his daily activities and duties. Now, he had before him only one task and that was to search for a suitable bridegroom for Devi. All of a sudden, his mind was drawn towards Lanka. At that time Kirtidhaval was the emperor of Lanka. As he contemplated on Kirtidhaval, he was greatly fascinated by his fame, his administrative system and his extraordinary heroism. Without losing even a moment's time, he carried out negotiations; made arrangements at lightning speed and celebrated the marriage of Devi with Kirtidhaval. As a result of this, Padmottar who was virtuous, noble and valiant, failed in his objective of securing the hand of Devi, in marriage.

Between Athindra Vidyadhar and Pushpottar, the emperor of Vidyadhars, there arose, knowingly or unknowingly, bitter hostility and animosity.

(3)

Once, Devi's brother, Shrikant went on a pilgrimage to Suvarnachal; and was returning to Meghpur, through the sky.

On the way, he had to fly over Ratnapur. By chance, his eyes fell upon a youthful damsel who was engaged in sports, in the garden. Shrikant's eyes were fixed upon that damsel who possessed bewitching beauty and he was fully and restlessly lost in an infatuated contemplation on her angelic grace and beauty. The damsel could not help noticing the youngster who kept intently looking at her and whose eyes seemed to be plying the arrows of love into her very heart and thrilling her to the brims of her being. She, too, easily became enamoured of him. Whoever loved that loved not at the first sight! Her gazing eyes with sparkling passion rolled; and he kept looking on her with unuttered accents more than mortal in their ardour.

And then what succeeded? The eyes met the eyes; and the heart met the heart. Impetuous emotions came tumbling but were choked before they expressed themselves. Ardent emotions of love met and mutually clashed; a fine and frenzied passion sprouted in their hearts; and bloomed into bliss. They became totally oblivious of themselves. The damsel lifted her eyes towards him; and began to gaze at him with infatuation.

Shrikant became enslaved by his love. His love for her reached its limits; and the beautiful damsel became infatuated with him. Shrikant came down to earth. He ardently took her hand in his; took her into the airship, and placing her in his lap, he resumed his journey through the sky.

When the damsel's friends and attendants noticed that she had been abducted by a stranger, they were terror-stricken.

"Oh! Padma has been abducted! Some radiant youth descended from the sky and disappeared with her. He carried away Padma!" They raised a hue and cry; and their horrified cries reverberated throughout the garden. The news of Padma's abduction spread like wild fire, throughout the city, within the twinkling of an eye. There was a loud commotion, in the city of Ratnapur. It did not take much time for the news to reach the ears of Pushpottar Vidyadhar. He began to rage with anger on hearing the news of the abduction of Princess Padma. Every drop of his blood erupted like a volcano. Pushpottar Vidyadhar decided to take revenge against the abductor of his dear

daughter and to humiliate him, by inflicting upon him some dreadful punishment. He grew restless with this thought.

Instantaneously, the drums of war were beaten. Ratnapur and the surrounding areas were shaken by the sounds of the divine trumpets whose sounds echoed through the limitless skies. Pushpottar Vidyadhar put on his armour and got ready for a war. Taking up deadly weapons; and leading a vast army, he pursued Shrikant. Shrikant knew very well that Pushpottar would come chasing him; so he travelled with the speed of wind, reached Lanka and met his brother-in-law.

He narrated to Kirtidhaval, in detail, the story of his love-affair with Padma and the manner in which he had brought her with him. He also told him that Pushpottar Vidyadhar was following him with a vast army, at a tremendous speed.

Kirtidhaval received Shrikant and Padma with cordiality. He told Shrikant to be calm and unperturbed.

Pushpottar, the emperor of Vidyadhars came pursuing Shrikant like a whirlwind, shattering all defences to pieces. He brought with him a vast army comprising countless soldiers, horses and elephants. His vast army extended as far as the eye could see. It was impossible to count the number of soldiers on foot. Pushpottar Vidyadhar was burning with terrific anger. In a way Shrikant had added insult to his injury. When he had sought alliance with him asking him to give his daughter, Devi in marriage to his son, he had severely admonished him and insulted him. Was this a small thing? Added to this, now, Shrikant had abducted his dear daughter. As a result of all this, his anger knew no bounds.

But Kirtidhaval was a master of ethical excellence and propriety besides possessing incisive intelligence. He wanted to settle the matter patiently and peacefully instead of violently retaliating against him. He did not want to use the principle of "an eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth", but to settle the matter amicably without causing offence to anyone. He was planning to ward off the impending calamity in a skilful manner. He desired to prevail upon Pushpottar Vidyadhar to see reason and thus to extinguish the raging flames of his recalcitrant anger.

The flames of anger and animosity only grow wilder by war and fighting. Hostilities are not removed by means of fighting. So, he always desired to adopt the policy of peace and compromise; and to root out anger and animosity completely.

He decided to send a very sensible and trustworthy messenger to Pushpottar. Accordingly, he sent such a messenger to Pushpottar; and the messenger met him.

The messenger respectfully saluted Pushpottar; and conveyed to him the message sent by Kirtidhaval. This was the message sent by Kirtidhaval. "Oh King! Do not you realize that the war you want to make is futile? A father has to give away his daughter to someone or the other. When your virtuous and noble daughter has chosen a husband after her own heart, why should a scholarly, sagacious and magnanimous King like you deem Shrikant guilty without any cause, without any offence on his part?"

"In spite of this, if you wage a war to gratify your feeling of false prestige, you will only cause great grief to your dear daughter. You will cause a deep injury to your daughter's tender heart. Will it not be a joyous matter to all if, instead of pursuing the path of hostility, you give your daughter in marriage to Shrikant whom she loves heartily?"

Even while Pushpottar was thinking seriously about the message sent by Kirtidhaval, an attendant sent by his daughter, Padma, came to him and respectfully conveyed to him a letter. It had been sent by Princess Padma. She had written;

"My dear father !

You are unnecessarily angry and agitated. Shrikant did not abduct me. On the contrary, the truth is that I loved him and chose him my husband, of my own free will. I was not at all forcibly taken away by him.

Therefore, I entreat you not to take recourse to war and violence which will cause the death of thousands of soldiers, and others".

On reading the letter written by his daughter, Pushpottar.

the emperor of Vidyadhars grew calm. His agitation and anger disappeared.

Actually, the anger of those who are thoughtful and sensible can be easily pacified by means of an appeal to their reason whereas we may have to move heaven and earth to pacify the anger of those whose intellects are inert.

The emperor of Vidyadhars thought within himself :

“What is the use of waging a war now and causing the death of thousands of soldiers when my daughter has loved Shrikant and chosen him her husband, after her own heart. Of course, he is my enemy’s son; but he is noble, virtuous and valiant . He is a radiant youth of rare and remarkable parts. What is wrong in celebrating their marriage ?”

Within a few moments, Pushpottar’s animosity changed into amity; his bellicosity changed into cordiality; and the calamitous prospect of a dreadful war changed into the joyful prospect of a happy marriage and the angry fulminations changed into joyous jubilations.

Kirtidhaval made magnificent arrangements to receive Pushpottar with royal honour. The marriage of Padma and Shrikant was performed in a grand manner.

The emperor of the Vidyadhars was supremely happy. He heartily blessed the couple wishing them prosperity and felicity; and then he returned to Ratnapur with his eyes moist with tears.

No one knows the ways of fate which are indeed inscrutable; and no one can know them in the future. The ways of fate are indeed inscrutable and incomprehensible.

(4)

It was morning. The sun-god had set out in his radiant chariot from the east to travel round the earth. Cows, buffaloes and other cattle were going towards forests and pastures to graze. The city of Lanka had awakened and was getting ready

for its daily occupations and activities. The early morning breeze was blowing gently and softly over the city. The breezy call of the incense-breathing morn impelled even the royal palace to discard the lassitude of the previous night and to wake up with a pleasant surprise at the gleeful touch of the heart-warming breeze; and it was becoming active. At that time, Kirtidhaval, the King of Lanka, his Queen-consort, Devi and Shrikant sat in a magnificently decorated chamber; and were engaged in a frolicsome conversation and witty jests and repartee. But Shrikant was somewhat grave while the others were gay and jubilant. He often glanced at Kirtidhaval and Devi; and remained silent and reticent.

“What is the matter, Shrikant ?

“Nothing”

“Nothing! Nothing! I can’t believe it. You are concealing something from us something that has been agitating your mind”.

“Dear King! Now, I wish to leave this place; and return home,” Shrikant, said this with great difficulty, word after word, slowly as if he pulled every word from his heart on to his lips which seemed to articulate them reluctantly.

“But why, for god’s sake ? Has anyone insulted you or ill-treated you; or has there been any lapse on our part in the comforts and treatment that have been given to you here ? Is that the reason for your desire to go away from us ?”

“There is no such reason, dear King !”

“If so, where is the need for your going away so urgently to Meghpur ? Look Shrikant, many have become your enemies in the Vaithadhya mountain. Under these circumstances, why do you desire to ruin your life being caught in the coils of a dreadful war ? I do not mean that you are afraid of war or that you are daunted by your enemies. You possess the strength and valour to rout your enemies. I also know very well that those who clash with and fight against you will surely become the victims of the all-devouring Death; and court a disaster.

Yet, we cannot bear with a separation from you. We love you heartily. We are indeed captivated by your intellectual incisiveness, discretion, politeness and your method of carrying out your tasks. Even the very thought of separation from you wounds our hearts grievously. Therefore, do not grieve us by speaking of leaving Lanka, now." Kirtidhaval spoke in a grave manner. "Dear brother ! You please stay with us," said Queen Devi adding strength to her husband's entreaty.

"Yes ! If you do not think it proper to stay here, you can stay in the Vanardweep which is close to the Rakshasdweep. Even the archipelago comprising such islands as '*Simhal*' and '*Barbarakula*' is our own. Think that it is a veritable heaven. You can choose any one of these islands and you can make it your capital; and rule over the area enjoying the felicities of peace and prosperity".

Shrikant found it impossible to break off the deep bonds of love and affection which his sister and brother-in-law had developed for him; and he could not but accept the suggestion of Kirtidhaval. So, he decided to act according to his brother-in-law's suggestion and chose to reside in the Vanardweep.

There stood in the Vanardweep a magnificent and fascinating mountain called *Kishkinda*. Shrikant built a new capital by name *Kishkindha* on the mountain of *Kishkinda*; and made it his Capital. Kirtidhaval the emperor of Lanka proclaimed Shrikant, the King of the Vanardweep; and crowned him King of that country.

Shrikant settled down at *Kishkindha* with his beloved wife, Padma; and began carrying out the administration with unexampled skill and ability. He was always thinking of the ways of increasing the welfare and progress of the people. He had abounding love and affection not only for human beings but also for animals and birds.

Once, Vanars (Monkeys) appeared in large numbers in all the forests, woods, groves, gardens, harbours, bowers and bushes of *Kishkindha*. In size and stature, they were huge and tall and sturdy. They kept leaping and jumping about here and there:

springing and skipping in joy and elation for their own amusement. They ate fruits, nuts and flowers. There was no need for anybody to give those things to them. The guards of the forest saw such four-footed animals for the first time. Therefore, they, at once, dutifully informed Shrikant of this strange phenomenon. When Shrikant heard about it, his wonder and amazement knew no bounds. When Shrikant saw personally the way in which the Vanars were sporting about, his heart involuntarily and spontaneously overflowed with affection for them. Shrikant made a royal proclamation, in the country :

“No one should kill the Vanars. The slaying of a monkey is prohibited. If anyone breaks this command of the King, he would be punished severely.” Not being satisfied with having issued this command, he began to rule over the Vanars also; and to take care of their welfare. He was never satiated with or weary of watching intently the sports and playful activities of the Vanars. He loved them heartily. He used to make arrangements to supply fruits and nuts and flowers as food to them.

Gradually, taking the example of the King, even the citizens of Kishkindha began to treat the monkeys with love and affection. They gave them food and drink as if they were their relatives and friends. The pictures of monkeys were painted on the walls of houses and mansions. The ornamental arches and festoons were decorated with the pictures of monkeys. Pillars and flags and even toys were designed in the form of monkeys.

Everywhere one could hear the various names of monkeys; and see the various postures and shapes of monkeys. The result of all this was that even the Vidyadhars who dwelt in the Vanardweep were considered as monkeys. On account of the close intimacy in which they lived with monkeys, even the human beings developed the same instincts as those of the monkeys.

One day, when Shrikant was sauntering about for pleasure on the roof of his palace, he heard an uproar in the sky, unexpectedly. He began to look at the sky intently. Thousands of gods, goddesses and Vidyadhars were traversing through the

sky speedily towards an island called Nandishwardweep. The heart of everyone was overflowing with devotion for the Jin. They were all self-forgetful. But everyone desired heartily to attain spiritual elevation by worshipping and saluting the imperishable images of the Jins. Naturally, even in the heart of Shrikant, there arose lofty contemplations. In his heart also, there arose the desire to visit the Nandishwar hill and attain spiritual elevation; and he got ready to set off on this holy pilgrimage.

He ordered his men to get ready his supernatural airship, and he began making enthusiastic preparations to set off on the pilgrimage. He took with him the holy substances necessary for the worship of the Jins. He left Kishkindha and followed the heavenly beings and Vidyadhars who were going towards the Nandishwardweep.

The lofty, sacred and ascending souls welcome happily any opportunity that comes their way and attain benefit from it with the desire of crossing the ocean of *Samsar* and of attaining spiritual elevation and purification; and they do not again sink to the bottom of perdition and impure passions and sensual cravings; and they carry out all possible endeavours to reap the fullest benefit from such an opportunity.

The natural propensity of human beings is to engage themselves easily in sinful activities and acquire questionable and sinful addictions and obsessions and to take the support of sinful props; and on account of these sinful props, sinful propensities and actions keep increasing.

But Shrikant took the support of an event that would bring spiritual welfare. The joy of carrying out a pilgrimage began to surge out in his heart like a spontaneous spring of sinuous waves. His supernatural airship was flying through the sky with the speed of wind; but, at one point, it stopped suddenly with a jerk.

How did it stop? Who stopped it thus? All of a sudden, Shrikant's face grew serious and thoughtful, and he raised his eye-brows in wonder. He closed his lips tightly. For a moment, he remained calm; and when he looked down, he saw there a

large and vast mountain. The airship had been obstructed by the sky-high peaks of the mountains. The airships of the heavenly beings, because of their inconceivable power, leaped over the peaks and flew ahead, unimpeded by those peaks. But Shrikant was a human being, All of a sudden, he felt greatly worried. Feeling helpless and agitated, he thought :

“With whom should I be angry ? Why should I get angry at all ? I am unfortunate. My objective has not been achieved and I have been thus impeded on account of the effect of the sins of my earlier lives or on account of weak and ineffective austerities. What is the use of leading this fruitless existence ? What is the use of all my possessions such as my kingdom, my throne, my incomparable wealth and the other things when they cannot help me to attain my lofty objectives ? What is the use of my children and other members of my family if they cannot help me to attain my objectives ? I bid good-bye to this meaningless *Samsar*. I am totally weary of it. I will discard my attachment for wordly prosperity and happiness and for my relatives and the members of my family; and I will dedicate my life to the path of spiritual elevation; and carry out austerities to attain that end. Enough ! This is the only auspicious way for me.”

All of a sudden, the spirit of renunciation which lay latent and dormant in his mind became patent; and began to glow in all its splendour. Shrikant renounced the *Samsar* and became a *Shraman* : i.e., a sadhu. He purified his life by subjecting it to the flames of spiritual austerities. He thus purified the gold of his soul and after the span of his life was over, he attained the *Nirvanpad* (the state of salvation).

Shrikant's *Atmatatva* (soul), should have been enveloped with only a very thin cover; that was why it tore into shreds and pieces that cover, all of a sudden, under the impact of an ordinary incident; and there appeared in him a serious and firm spirit of renunciation. Truly, how profoundly spiritual were his contemplations which touched the very Sun-centre of his soul. Without thinking of destroying the sky-high peaks of the mountain that had impeded his pilgrimage to the Nandishwar-

dweep; taking a clue from that impediment, he made a tremendous determination to root out and destroy the sky-high peaks of infatuation, illusion and deception which are the basic impediments on the path of salvation; and he carried out austere endeavours to attain that end.

May be he could not carry out his pilgrimage to Nandishwar-dweep; but he carried out his *Mokshayatra* the pilgrimage to the supreme state of salvation.

II

LANKA : ITS DECLINE AND RISE

The mighty flood of time keeps flowing with the greatest speed. Countless *Yugas* (millenia) have passed. Countless Tirthankars have passed into eternity on the ever-flowing floods of time. Countless *Chakravartis*, *Vasudevs*, *Prati Vasudevs*, *Baladevs*, human beings and demons have floated away on the impetuous river of time.

In course of time, countless kings occupied the thrones of Lanka and Vanardweep, and slept for ever in the lap of Time.

After the millenium of Bhagwan Shreyansnath, the millenia of Vasupujya, Vimalnath, Ananthnath, Dharmanath, Shantinath, Kunthunath, Aranath, Mallinath etc., passed.

Then, the millenium of Bhagwan Munisuvrat Swami, the twentieth Tirthankar came. Tadithkesh the great hero was ruling over Lanka. There existed a strong bond of friendship between the kings of Lanka and those of Vanardweep. They were bound together by the bounds of love and friendship. Dhanodhadirath, the king of Vanardweep and Tadithkesh, the king of Rakshasdweep were like two bodies having one life. In other words, there was a deep friendship between them.

Once, Tadithkesh, the king of Lanka entertained the desire of visiting the Vanardweep to enjoy seeing the beauties of nature in Kishkindha such as its magnificent forests, and its glorious and well-maintained gardens and orchards. He sent a

message to Dhanodhadhirath that he would be visiting the Vanardweep to see the graces and glories of nature there. The king of Vanardweep was delighted to hear that Tadithkesh was visiting his country; and kept waiting impatiently, to receive him. One day, Tadithkesh went to the Vanardweep with the members of the royal family. After having gone there, he was completely absorbed in various games and sports in the garden called *Nandan* which was as splendid as the *Nandanvan*, the heavenly garden, and which was a veritable heaven.

Queen Chandra, the wife of Tadithkesh who was extremely beautiful was absorbed in playing sports in a dense part of the forest. Then, suddenly a monkey, huge in shape and size, and of massive body descended from a nearby tree and attacked the queen. The monkey scored her with its sharp nails; and all over her body there were cuts made by nails from which blood spurted out. Terrified by the sudden and unexpected attack made by the monkey, the queen screamed aloud in fear and anxiety. Her voice was shaken with fear and pain. Her throat was choked. She began to shudder with horror, shaking like a leaf.

How can ignorant creatures know when and in what manner they become victims of terrible calamities on account of their evil deeds and sinful actions? That is why men of spiritual excellence preach to *Jivas* to inspire them to make endeavours to eradicate their dependence on evil deeds and to discard their sinful propensities.

As soon as Tadithkesh heard the queen's cries of distress and horror, he became greatly worried and agitated. When he found that a monkey had attacked the queen, he became mad with anger. At once, he took out of his *Tunir* (quiver) a sharp and pointed arrow and aimed it at the monkey.

Within the twinkling of an eye, the arrow ran through the chest of the monkey. On account of terrible pain, the monkey began crying and groaning. It began running to save its life. But how could it run away? There was no limit to its agony. After running a few steps, it tumbled down.

Nearby, there stood a Muniraj rapt in deep meditation.
His face was serene and resplendent like the moon !
His eyes were purer than the petals of a lotus !

Experiencing terrible pain on account of being hit in the vitals, the monkey looked, intently towards the Muniraj in deep distress and utter helplessness. The Muniraj was greatly overcome with compassion for the monkey; and at once, he bent over the groaning monkey. He placed his lips at the ear of the monkey and recited the supremely auspicious *Navkar Mantra*, *Shri Namaskar Mahamantra* was the best and lasting preparation for the monkey's journey to the other world. The monkey breathed once or twice with great difficulty; and then the bird of its life flew away.

The Muniraj was, indeed, an ocean of compassion and kindness. When he found that the dying Jivatma did not have the necessary preparation for its great journey to the other world, he benevolently bestowed upon it, at once, a tremendous "preparation".

The drama of the monkey's life came to an end.

His soul achieved a transmigration; and entered another body.

On account of the efficiency of the *Navkar Mantra*, the monkey was born in the heavenly world. By means of *Avadhijnan* i.e., extra sensory perception, he remembered his previous life. He visualized even now his blood-covered body lying on the ground; and the Muniraj standing nearby in a silent meditation. He was overwhelmed with gratitude when he remembered the great benefaction that the Muniraj had bestowed upon him. At once, he approached the Muniraj, and stood before him for a moment, with his head bent down in veneration.

A Muniraj is worthy of being saluted; but a benevolent Muniraj is worthy of being worshipped with a special veneration. After the salutation, his eyes fell on the forest around, and burst forth with raging indignation. He noticed that Tadithkesh's soldiers were cruelly and heartlessly killing the monkeys.

At once, he assumed the form of a mighty, huge and formidable monkey. He also created by means of his magical powers a vast army of *Vanars*; and attacked the soldiers of Tadithkesh. They began uprooting huge trees and whirling them at the Rakshasa army. They began raining large stones on the Rakshasa army. Within a short time, a fierce battle broke out between the Rakshasa army and the *Vanaras*. Very soon, the Rakshasa army was routed and vanquished, and they ran away from the forest in utter humiliation.

Tadithkesh did not try to stop them, but he began to think : "Surely, this is a calamity caused by some angry goddess. Knowingly or unknowingly, I should have acted in an improper manner." Soon, he discarded his weapons and went forward, towards the monkey. He stood before the monkey and after bowing to him in great reverence; he said, folding his hands in politeness :

"I am sure that you are some divine being. Why have you assumed this monstrous form; and why are you attacking us in this wild and violent manner?"

By this time, the Vanara's anger had subsided. Within the twinkling of an eye, the monstrous form changed into a radiant being. He narrated the entire story to Tadithkesh, the emperor of the Rakshasas.

The emperor was greatly astounded on hearing the words of that divinely radiant being. Tadithkesh took the divine being to Avilamb Mahamuni; and said to him politely :

"Oh great Muni! How can there be enmity between me and the Vanaras ? Kindly enlighten us. We shall be grateful to you."

Then, the emperor of Lanka and the divine being sat before the great muni.

The muni spoke in a serene manner : "Oh king ! This is related to an incident that took place in an earlier age. In those days, you lived in the city of Shravasti. You were the son of the minister of that kingdom. Your name was Datta. At that

time, this Vanar was a hunter, living in Kashi. In course of time, you became a wandering mendicant. You became a *shraman* in order to get rid of the bondage of *Moha* (infatuation) and *Maya* (deception); and began wandering from village to village; from city to city; and through forests; and in the course of those wanderings, you, once, happened to go to the city of Kashi. Just when you were entering the city, he was going out for a hunt. When he saw you with your shaven head, coming from the opposite direction, he thought : "Oh ! This fellow with a shaven head has made a mess of my plan to go hunting. It is a very bad omen. Now, there is no use in going for a hunt". He easily became wild with rage. On account of anger, he did not realize the limits of propriety and attacked you with all his might. At once, you died. You were born in the *Mahendra* heaven and there you remained for a long time enjoying the various heavenly delights and then after your death there, you were born as Tadithkesh, the king of Lanka.

The offender continued to indulge in such enormities; and went to hell and stayed there for a long time experiencing terrible torments; and after his death there, he was born as a *Vanar* in the forests of Kishkindha. This is the cause for the hostility between you two."

On hearing the story of his *Purvajanma* (earlier life), from the great muni, he felt a strange commotion in his heart. "We cannot say what kind of dreadful sins the *Jiva* commits in his wanderings through the *Samsar*, and what terrible consequences emerge from those sins". Tadithkesh thought deeply thus; and realized that the *Samsar* was unreal and insubstantial.

Having saluted the great muni, Tadithkesh returned to Lanka. While returning, home, he did not have a thousandth part of the enthusiasm and zest he had while going to Kishkindha. He was in a state of deep mental and emotional depression and wistful melancholy. He had no interest in the throne or in the royal splendour; he had lost all attachment for his sons and the other members of his family; and his fascination for his beautiful queens also had completely disappeared. Moreover, he ceased to have any interest in the progress and pros-

perity of Lanka. He began to feel that food, drinks, sports and games were insipid, tasteless and illusory. He decided to hand over the administration to Prince Sukesha and to discard his attachment for his kingdom and to divest himself of his responsibilities as the king of Lanka.

King Tadithkesh became a *Rajarshi* in a short time. For a long time, he lived a life of absolute purity and prosperity; and having achieved liberation from all his *Karmas*, he attained the *Parampad* (the supreme state).

Dhanodadhirath, the king of Vanardweep was a bosom friend of Tadithkesh. When Tadithkesh had renounced the *Samsar*, would he hesitate even a little to follow the path of renunciation chosen by his friend? So, he too became a *Shraman*; and began to pursue the righteous path of renunciation.

(2)

After Tadithkesh renounced the *Samsar*, Prince Sukesha was crowned king of Lanka. The king of Kishkindha began to rule over Vanardweep.

At that time, Mandirmali, the greatest of the Vidyadhars was ruling over Adityapuri situated in the midst of the magnificent and incomparable mountain-range of *Vaithadhya*. He had a beautiful daughter by name Shrimala.

As soon as Shrimala stepped on the threshold of youth, her father, Mandirmali, the emperor of Vidyadhars began to search for a suitable bridegroom for her. He planned a *Swayamvar* (a ceremony prevalent in ancient India in which the bride chose her husband). He extended a warm invitation to all the kings of Vidyadhars, princes and heirs — designate. Kishkindhi, the king of Vanardweep also came to Adityapur to attend the *Swayamvar*. The hall of the *Swayamvar* was filled with the kings of Vidyadhars. Only the princess Shrimala had not yet entered the hall. All were eagerly awaiting her arrival. Mandirmali, the emperor of Vidyadhars sat on his golden throne which had been studded with precious stones.

Very soon, the princess adorning herself with the sixteen decorations entered the hall, like a light of heavenly radiance. It was as if Urvashi herself, the heavenly damsel of incomparable beauty came down to earth, in search of fresher sports. She was accompanied by the experienced attendant of the harem, and her friends. The princess held in her hands a garland of fragrant and fascinating flowers.

The attendant introduced to her the kings of the Vidyadhars, princes and heirs-designate one by one; and described in pleasing words, the line, the family — history, the attractive features, the artistic attainments, the valour, the kingdom and the city of each one of the assembled princes and kings and led her on. As she moved forwards, some princes and kings felt disappointed since they had not been chosen by her.

In the hall of the *Swayamvar*, the atmosphere became agitated. As the princess appeared before a prince, his face grew radiant with hope; but as she moved on, his face became bleak and depressed. Several princes were disappointed in this manner. The remaining rivals desiring her hand in marriage, were eagerly waiting for the princess to approach them. She approached King Kishkindhi, the king of Vanardweep. As soon as Shrimala approached Kishkindhi, a strange, and delightful thrill flashed through her veins to the brims of her being. She stopped before him as if spell — bound. For a moment, she glanced at him with fixed eyes and put the garland around his neck.

Joy and jubilation reigned everywhere. The hall of the *Swayamvar* began to overflow with joy. Mandirmali, the emperor of Vidyadhars felt supremely happy. But probably fate did not approve of all this. She threw an apple of discord into the assembly; and there arose a dreadful dissension. Prince Vijaysimha who had come from Ratanupur suddenly burst into a fit of fury. His face grew red with anger. Blinded by the false pride of being a hero of extraordinary valour, he began thundering: "Who invited these monkeys here? Once, these monkeys were defeated and driven away from the Vaithadhya mountain; and they ran away like thieves from there. Yet, they

have not desisted from their impudence ! These are low, wicked and despicable creatures. But this time, I will not allow them to go away alive; I will cut them to pieces like animals on the altar of the *Swayamvar*; and I will offer their blood and bones as a sacrifice to appease my anger". Having uttered these furious cries that cracked the skies, he took out his sword and stood up.

The Vidyadhars that had assembled in the hall were divided into two groups. Some took sides with the valiant Vijaysimha; and some supported the radiant prince, Kishkindhi. Within a few moments the jubilations gave place to indignant fulminations; and the hall of the *Swayamvar* became a battle-field. A dreadful war broke out between the two groups. Trumpets were blown; and drums were beaten. The entire mountain range of the Vaithadhya began to shake and reverberate with the deafening noises of war.

Streams of blood began to flow out of the bazaars and the mansions of the city. The city of Adityapur was plunged in surging floods of hot and steaming blood of men and animals. The atrocious and cruel massacre of men incensed Andhak, the younger brother of Kishkindhi. He assumed a formidable form; and killed countless Vidyadhars, and then like a vast and dreadful monster, he rushed towards Vijaysimha with an impetuous speed; and with one single sweep of his sword, he cut off the head of Vijaysimha. Soon after Vijaysimha was killed, the Vidyadhars who were supporting him fled from the battle-field; King Kishkindhi set off to his country taking his beautiful bride, Shrimala with him.

Actually, how dreadful and tragic a war is ! How terrible are its consequences ! No one realized this truth in the past; nor will anyone realize it in the future. The decrees of Destiny cannot be altered; and what is decreed cannot be averted. What has to occur, will occur. The destruction that had taken place in Adityapur filled King Kishkindhi with boundless pride and arrogance. He was elated with false pride and became puffed up with overwhelming joy. He grew proud and

haughty, thinking thus, "I have laid flat my enemies; and have achieved a tremendous victory. Now, no one can escape from me unscathed; and no one can shake me. But any seed lies concealed in the soil; and is not visible. In the same manner, when, once, the seed of enmity is sown; though it may not be outwardly visible, a thorny plant grows out, assumes the shape of a monstrous tree and grows a poisonous fruit, and brings about dreadful consequences."

Just as the flames of fire cannot be checked; the news of the death of his son reached the ears of the king of Ratanupur. The rising anger of Ashaniveg, the emperor of Vidyadhars grew intense. On account of anger, his face grew red and began to flame out. In order to take revenge against his enemies for having killed his son, he marched, with his vast army to the Vanardweep and attacked it. His heroic warriors destroyed the forests and gardens of Kishkindha; and laid them waste. They shattered to pieces all the defences of the Vanardweep. Roaring like lions, Kishkindhi, his younger brothers, Andhak and Sukesh, the king of Lanka came into the battle-field. A tumultuous war broke out between the two parties. The battle-field was covered with bleeding dead bodies. Everywhere blood flowed in floods. Ashaniveg stood at the head of the army and directed the military operations himself. His terrible war-cries struck terror into the hearts of the monkeys; harassed and vanquished them. His angry and piercing eyes were looking for Andhak who had killed his son. Nearby, Andhak was engaged in routing and destroying the army of the Vidyadhars. Fighting in a ferocious manner, he was slaying the soldiers of the Vidyadhar army; and he approached Ashaniveg. Seeing Andhak before him, Ashaniveg grew furious and pounced upon him like a wild and ferocious lion pouncing upon a deer. With one single stroke, he cut off the head of Andhak. As soon as Andhak was slain there arose deafening cries of dismay and distress from the Vanara army. They ran helter-skelter mortally terrified. Sukesh and Kishkindhi also ran away to the Pathala Lanka, to save their lives. Having thus avenged his son's death and after having laid waste the Vanardweep, Ashaniveg returned to Ratanupur.

While Kishkindhi was in Pathala Lanka, two sons were

born to him. The first one was named Aditya; and the second one was named Raksh. Both were supremely radiant.

Once, Kishkindhi went on a pilgrimage to the Meru. He performed circumambulations around the Jin images there; and with overflowing devotion, he worshipped them. He felt greatly elated and delighted by the pilgrimage. While he was returning from there, by chance, his eyes fell on the mountain, *Madhugiri*. He was greatly fascinated by the grandeur of the groves, woods and the forests on the mountains. He decided to build a beautiful and uniquely attractive city on that mountain in the midst of those beautiful, natural surroundings. He was a Vidyadhar who had supreme mastery over countless arts and accomplishments. Within the twinkling of an eye, he brought into existence on that mountain a magnificent city called Kishkindhanagar which shone splendid like a gem on the golden peaks of the mountain, *Madhugiri*. He gave up the plan of returning to Pathal Lanka; and settled down there with his family. He lived there like Kubera coming to the Himalayas and living on its peaks.

Kishkindhi's bosom friend, Sukesh, the king of Lanka was living in Pathal Lanka, experiencing inordinate agony and anguish; and enduring calamities and torments. At the time, Queen Indrani gave birth to three sons who were named Mali, Sumali and Malyavan. They were valiant and radiant like their father Sukesh. All the three brothers possessed extraordinary physical might. They mastered countless arts and accomplishments. When they entered the phase of youth, they mastered all the arts of war and became invincible heroes.

One day, seeing that Queen Indrani's face was heavy, depressed with sorrow and distress, her first son asked her in a tone of anxiety, "Dear mother ! though you have three heroic and valiant sons, why are you so deeply depressed ? Why is your face bleak and blighted ? You seem to be in some deep anguish. What is the cause for your sorrow ? Are you displeased with us ? Have we committed any serious breach or blunder ?"

"No dear son! No such thing", said Queen Indrani and passed her hand gently and affectionately over his head; and then again, she was lost in deep thoughtfulness.

But how could Mali, Shrimali and Malyavan have any peace of mind when their mother was in such deep anguish? They again said to her:

"Dear mother! Kindly tell us the cause for your sorrow; and then see the tremendous valour and affection of your heroic sons. Mother, we will do anything to rid you of your sorrow."

Queen Indrani looked straight into the eyes of her sons; heaved a long sigh; and again she fell into silence and thoughtfulness. She turned her face aside; and wiped the tears streaming from her eyes, with the edge of her sari. Her sons, Mali, Shrimali and Malyavan could not keep quiet on seeing this action of their mother's.

"Mother dear! You have been weeping over some disaster; and you have been concealing it from us. Has any wicked fellow offended you by looking at you with lusty eyes? or are you afflicted with any serious and secret malady? When you, being the mother of three valiant and radiant sons, keep shedding tears thus, we feel ashamed of ourselves; and we feel that our very existence is futile".

Since her sons again and again insisted, she composed herself a little and said:

"Dear children! You know King Ashaniveg, the king of Vaithadhya defeated your father, the king of Rakshasas and his bosom friend Kishkindhi. He captured our country; and installed on the throne of Lanka Nirghat who humbly and slavishly abides by his commands. Since then we have been helplessly living in Pathal Lanka. The sun of my happiness set when we were thus routed and compelled to flee and take shelter here. As long as my enemies are....."

"Mother! Is that all? Here and now, we wear the dust of your feet on our foreheads and swear that we shall never rest

peacefully; and we shall never show you our faces until we have completely routed Nirghat, and occupied our father's kingdom".

The three brothers were determined to recapture their ancestral kingdom. Their faces grew red with the flames of anger and resembled erupting volcanoes. Their declarations of war were heard everywhere. War-drums were beaten. Thousands of Rakshasa heroes gave out sky-cracking war-cries. While setting out on their campaign to recapture Lanka, Mali, Shrimali and Malyavan bowed their heads to their mother and wore on their foreheads the dust of their mother's feet. They received the blessings of their elders and at an auspicious time, they set off towards Lanka with their vast army. Traversing through the sky, the Rakshasa army entered the boundaries of Lanka. The Rakshasa heroes organized themselves into wonderful and impenetrable battle-formations, surrounded the city on all sides; and laid a siege to it. When Nirghat who had grown arrogant and haughty on account of the support of Ashaniveg, the Vidyadhar, heard about the approach of the Rakshasa army, he was not at all shaken or dismayed. He made immediate preparations for a battle in the air; and set off to fight against the Rakshasa army.

As soon as he saw Nirghat, Mali thundered with anger; and challenged him to a fight.

Both were great heroes and able warriors. Like ferocious lions they fought against each other. Along with Mali, the other two radiant heroes Shrimali and Malyavan also shouted war-cries and displayed their skill. Nirghat was completely stupefied on seeing Mali who was fighting like a veritable Yama, the god of death. The ground beneath his feet began to slip and give way. He kept staring at him in absolute stupefaction; and Mali without losing even a fraction of a second cut off his head like a woodman cutting off a banyan tree; and slew him. A panicky stampede ensued among his soldiers when they saw this dreadful sight of their master lying on the ground like a cut off banyan tree. Mali's exultant cries of victory reverberated throughout the whole universe.

Mali was crowned King of Lanka in an auspicious *Muhurt*

(time). At the same time, on the mountain of Kishkindha, Kishkindhi's son Aditya was crowned king of that country, with great honour. The people of the Rakshasdwep and the Vanardwep were elated with delight and joy and in a moment, they forgot the oppression, distress and despair that they had experienced in the past and began to carry out celebrations and jubilations to display their joy.

In Lanka and in the city of Kishkindha, people lighted ghee-lamps to display their jubilation. The entire atmosphere began to reverberate with the auspicious songs sung by the people. The princes had regained their kingdoms after a long time.

(3)

The anger of Ashanivega had subsided after Andhak had been slain. After he returned to his capital, Ratanupur, a peculiar change had taken place in him. His former violence and aggressiveness had disappeared from his thoughts and actions. A sea-change, rich and strange seemed to have taken place in him. An unexampled serenity had appeared in his heart. He had grown weary of political entanglements and the daily routine of dreary involvements. At every step, he began to realize the futility and meaninglessness of *Samsar*. In this period of intellectual and emotional turmoil, in his heart, there sprouted the aspiration to pursue the path of salvation. On account of the imperceptible impact of his lofty contemplations, he entertained a strong desire to renounce the *Samsar*; and actually, he renounced all his royal splendour, power and pelf and set out in search of sublime spiritual felicity.

Prince Sahasrar acceded to the throne of Ratanupur.

One day, an incident occurred. Chitrasundari, the Queen-consort of King Sahasrar was reposing on her bed in her sleeping chamber. The lights in the chamber, were glowing dimly, A cool and delightful breeze from the west was blowing into the chamber. Everywhere, the atmosphere was silent and serene. All in the palace were sleeping soundly. At such a time, Chitrasundari who happened to be in a semi-dream state saw a

fascinating dream. She had not seen much a sweet and inconceivable dream at any time before; so she was filled with joy. She woke up; and sat up on her bed; thought of her dream for a few moments; smiled to herself; and then she went to her husband's chamber and described her auspicious dream to him.

Sahasrar heard the account of her dream; and thought deeply about it. With overflowing love he drew the queen towards him; and said this in a tender and cheerful manner.

"Dear Queen, you are going to give birth to a radiant son. Our long cherished desire is going to the fulfilled." Chitra-sundari became pregnant; and the child began to grow in her womb like the waxing moon. Everywhere in Ratanupur, the atmosphere became jubilant. Day by day, the various organs of her body began to blossom and to grow resplendent. During her pregnancy, there arose in her heart a strange desire. The desire was a wicked one and it was such a desire as would cause agitation to her mind. The fulfilment of that desire was impossible and if it was fulfilled, it would be disgraceful and despicable. As a result of this, her tender and beautiful body began to grow weaker and weaker, day by day. She became lean and feeble. The clouds of doubt, fear and anxiety began to hover over her mind which had been in great delight before the appearance of this evil desire. She lost her taste for food; she lost all interest in amusements and enjoyments. Throughout the day, she used to lie down in her room in deep worry and agitation.

King Sahasrar was greatly worried seeing her mental agitation. In a voice shaken by anguish, he asked the queen :

"Dearest ! What is the cause for your agitation which has brought you, to this condition ? Is any insoluble problem worrying you ? Won't you tell me what it is ?"

"There is no such thing, my dear king".

"How can I believe that no problem is worrying you ? If there is no problem why is your tender and beautiful body withering away ? Dear Queen ! Surely there is some problem

which you are concealing from me. Don't you have faith in me? Can't you reveal your secret to me?"

"My lord!" and as she said this, there flowed from her eyes streams of tears, naturally. Her throat became choked. Her lips began to shiver with agitation.

Sahasrar drew Queen Chitrasundari towards himself; and said in a grave manner :

"Whatever may be the problem that has been agitating you; you can tell me what it is without any hesitation. We will find a suitable solution to it. If you remain silent and if you do not tell me the cause for your agitation, I will discard food and drink from today onwards. I may have to die on account of it. I am quite willing to accept death but I can't bear with the sight of your mental agony".

Sahasrar's insistence was too great for her to resist. She could not continue to be silent. Compelled thus, helplessly she began to speak to him about the evil desire that had appeared in her heart.

"My dear Lord ! The evil desire of enjoying a sexual union with Devendra has appeared in my heart. From the time the evil desire arose in my heart, I have been experiencing great agitation and fear. I do not know what kind of *Jiva* is in my womb. Even before it is born, it is prompting such a sinful and harmful desire in me".

Of course, Chitrasundari told her husband, Sahasrar about the wicked desire that had arisen in her heart; but when she thought of how he might respond to her revelation, she began to shiver with fear.

But Sahasrar was a man of deep wisdom and intellectual and emotional equanimity. He did not misunderstand the Queen's desire but he began to think deeply about her desire. He did not show any displeasure or contempt for her in his actions, activities or thoughts; and he wisely planned to fulfil her desire.

The effects brought about by *Karmas* are strange and are fraught with irony and mockery. Chitrasundari was absolutely

devoted to her husband; and in the heart of such a chaste woman, there arose that wicked desire of enjoying a sexual union with Devendra on account of the prompting of the *Jiva* in her womb. What a harmful and disastrous effect was produced on the mind by the *Karma* of the *Jiva*, which was about to be born. The kind of desires and distortions that appear in the mind of a mother when she is pregnant indicate the future of the *Jiva* in her womb.

Sahasrar was the emperor of Vidyadhars. Therefore nothing was impossible or hard for him. By virtue of his magical powers, he assumed the form of Devendra and fulfilled the desire that had arisen in the heart of Chitrasundari. In course of time, Chitrasundari gave birth to a beautiful son.

There is a proverb : "The growing tree is seen in the sprout." This proverb was cent per cent true in the case of the prince. Even as a boy, the prince showed himself to be valiant. He was supremely radiant, brilliant and beautiful. At an auspicious time, with the necessary and proper rituals, the naming ceremony was performed. He was named Indra. The boy was given education and training by scholarly and expert teachers; and Indra's life began to blossom forth like a flower. His exceptional inborn talents began to manifest themselves.

A peculiar transformation came about in Indra as soon as he stepped on the threshold of youth.

The mountain ranges of Vaithadhya began to shake and shrink beneath his arrogant and powerful steps. All the Vidyadhar kings who dwelt in Vaithadhya began to shudder on hearing his voice which seemed to rain fire.

All began to say : "Indra's heroism is incomparable ! Indra's intellectual attainments are extraordinary and Indra's valour and prowess are incomparable !"

Indra's fame as a mighty hero spread everywhere. Sahasrar's happiness knew no bounds. He thought, "Indra is absolutely capable of carrying out the administration of Ratanupur. He has acquired the necessary abilities and accomplishments. Now, the time has come for my discarding these responsibilities

and engage myself in spiritual contemplation retiring from active life."

In consequence, Indra became the king of Ratanupur.

As soon as Indra acceded to the throne, he took a heroic decision to make his kingdom an empire; and to perpetuate the name and fame of his ancestors. He proclaimed four Vidyadhar kings as the heads of the four directions of his kingdom and to act as defenders of the four directions.

- He divided his army into seven regiments and placed them under the command of seven capable commanders.
- He established three executive assemblies.
- He invented a tremendously destructive weapon called "Vajra".
- He made a mighty elephant the *Iravat* (the elephant of Devendra).
- He created "Rambha" and "Urvasi" and made them his court-dancers.
- He appointed "Brihaspati" his chief minister.
- He appointed a Vidyadhar, by name Naigameshi, who was a heroic warrior, the supreme commander of his forces.
- In other words, he organized his court and army in imitation of Devendra's heavenly court and army, by naming Vidyadhars after the heavenly beings and by appointing them to the various posts; and thus laid the foundation of an excellent Vidyadhar tradition; and impelled all his subjects to honour him as Devendra. He was extremely proud of his intellectual attainments, his artistic accomplishments, his tremendous heroism and his bewildering beauty of appearance.

But this is the *Samsar*. Here no one's pride remains intact and unshaken. Here, the efficacy of *Karmas* bestows on *Jivas* extraordinary prosperity and incomparable grandeur; but at the same time it can also inspire in *Jivas* the desire to renounce them. If the *Jiva* grows arrogant over the prosperity and grandeur thus attained; and develops false pride; and if he tries to

be the supreme master of the prosperity and power ungratefully, forgetting the efficacy of *Karma*, it will soon create rivals and render the *Jiva* penurious and, in consequence, he will have to knock about from door to door like a helpless and dejected beggar.

It did not take much time for the fame and influence of Indra, the Vidyadhar king of Ratanupur to spread everywhere and to make people deem him a rival to Mahendra. When Mali, the king of Lanka heard about Indra's fame, he was deeply shocked. The news reached him as a bolt from the blue. It was as if someone had unknowingly dealt a deadly blow to his pride. He grew wild with rage. He could not bear to see Indra, the Vidyadhar king reigning supreme as a rival to Mahendra; and he could not bear with his fame and influence; and so, soon, he made preparations for a war against Indra. The arrogance and power of Indra, the king of Vidyadhars posed a challenge to his tremendous militaric powers and his vast army; so, he decided to fight a war against Indra, the king of the Vidyadhars. Soon, war-drums were beaten; and trumpets were blown. The ear-cracking noise of the bugles began to reverberate throughout the skies and the Pathala, the nether-world. The Rakshasa warriors were impatient to display their tremendous abilities on the battle-field.

King Mali with his brother Sumali and his vast army, set off towards the Vaithadhya mountain and began traversing through the sky. The whole sky was filled with the Rakshasa warriors. At that point, Sumali whispered to his brother.

"Brother! We have not witnessed any auspicious omens".

"Sumali! you always behave like a coward". Mali who was intoxicated by his tremendous militaric prowess, spoke thus deriding his brother.

"Brother! This donkey is braying in a hoarse manner".

"Let it bray as it wants to! You stop braying".

"Those jackals have been howling by fits and starts. Their mournful cries are inauspicious. They forecast terrible calamities."

"Will you stop your senseless babbling or not ? Don't you have confidence in your brother's invincible prowess ? See if I do not force this imitation — Indra to lick the dust in a disgraceful manner in a battle; and if I do not return home like a storm, victorious and triumphant. Heroic persons do not care for good omens or bad omens. Oh ! You mad fellow ! They have faith and confidence in their own might and militaric prowess."

"Oh king of Rakshasas ! Omens by themselves do not cause harm to anyone, but they surely presage the auspicious or the inauspicious possibilities of our future. Even great *Rishis* have described the power of omens",

"Be quiet ! I do not need your idiotic suggestions". Mali said, suddenly growing angry.

What could poor Sumali do ? He felt helpless. He had to be silent since Mali was obdurate. Soon the warriors of the Rakshasa army descended on the mountains and caves of the *Vaithadhya* like a cloud of locusts.

Mali challenged Indra to a fight. He was not the heavenly Indra but he was the Indra of the *Vidyadhars*. He retaliated in a valiant manner. The bazaars and mansions of *Ratanupur* and the surrounding area began to reverberate with war-cries and the proclamation of war. The *Vidyadhar* army was not at all inferior to the Rakshasa army in ability, militaric prowess and strategic wisdom and skill. The Indra of the *Vidyadhars* ascended his *Iravat*. He carried in his hand the mighty weapon called "*Vajra*". With a vast army which was like an ocean in magnitude, Indra set out to fight against the enemies.

The two armies clashed. A dreadful war broke out. The warriors on both sides were fighting with bows, arrows, swords, spears, lances and daggers in a ferocious manner. War-cries and counter war-cries began to reverberate through the skies. Everywhere, shrieks, screams, moanings, deep sighs and serious cries filled the air. Their weapons clashed against one another and the metallic noises of the weapons filled the air. Everywhere fiery flames arose. Just as rocks roll down a mountain,

mighty and intoxicated elephants and radiant horses began to fall down and to roll in floods of blood. The heads of countless warriors were cut; and they fell on the ground helter-skelter. Everywhere, rivers of blood flowed. Both the armies were deeply absorbed in fighting daring death. Step by step, Indra's army inflicted heavy casualties on the Rakshasa army and routed it. It began retreating losing all confidence of winning a victory. Finally, the soldiers of the Rakshasa army gave up fighting and ran away in mortal dread. Whatever may be the might of an elephant, it cannot defeat the lion, the king of beasts. A lion is a lion.

Seeing his soldiers running away from the battle-field, Mali grew furious with anger; and like an enraged bull, he pounced upon the army of Indra.

Indra also rushed forward with his mighty warriors whom he had named Yama, Varuna, Kuber etc., Within a moment, Mali and Indra were face to face in the battle-field. They glared at each other; shouted war-cries with deafening voices and pounced upon each other. A dreadful war raged between them for a long while. Neither was inferior to the other in militaric prowess and strength. There seemed to be no end to the fighting. Suddenly, Indra became greatly irritated and by means of his *Vajrayudh*, he cut off the head of Mali.

As soon as Mali was slain, the Vanara army and the Rakshasa army were completely vanquished. They ran away from the battle-field.

Indra crowned Vaishnavan his trustworthy friend, King of Lanka; and returned to Ratanupur, his capital.

III

THE BIRTH OF RAVAN

The war that was waged in the mountains and caves of Vaithadhya was virtually an invitation to tragic consequences and total defeat and destruction. The Vanara army and the Rakshasa army were completely routed. What did they expect? and what did they get? Let alone defeating Indra, the King of Vidyadhars; the Vanara army and the Rakshasa army lost everything and were utterly disgraced and defeated. Lanka and Kishkindha which had been prosperous for a long time again fell upon evil days; and lost all their wealth and happiness. The time came for their total defeat and disgrace. A time of adversity set in. The agitation and anguish of Sumali, the King of Rakshasas knew no bounds.

If all the desires and aspirations of man are fulfilled, then, he would not feel the necessity of carrying out endeavours relating to *Dharma* and for the attainment of *Moksha*. Ninety nine per cent of man's desires and aspirations are frustrated under the iron-feet of *Karmas*. Man may wish for hundreds of things; but his wishes are never fulfilled. After the war ended all the warriors of the Vanara army and the Rakshasa army gathered around Sumali. Their faces were sad and deeply depressed. Even on the resplendent face of Sumali, there appeared clear marks of agitation. On account of anguish, he had assumed silence. His face which was always held high, was, now, bent towards the ground in sorrow. Everywhere, stillness and silence reigned supreme. His palace was steeped in stupefied stillness.

Prajnanidhi, the Chief Minister of Lanka said in a humble manner, breaking the ice, "Your Highness! Victory and defeat are not in our hands. They are the sport of fates. What is the

use of thus giving way to agitation and despair ? Someone has rightly said", "If the head is safe, hats are many". You are worrying yourself in vain".

"Prajnanidhi ! I am deeply worried by one thing. Fate did not favour us inspite of our tremendous endeavours and the cruel death of our dear brother. I do not know what is in store for the Rakshasa dynasty. I do not know what Destiny has decreed regarding our future."

"Oh King of Lanka ! Though this is a time of ill-luck for us I think instead of losing heart, we should strengthen our army and plan to teach a bitter lesson to Indra who is haughty. I think we should destroy him", the commander of the army. Vajranand said in an angry voice, spitting fire.

"No, No. My dear friends ! That is absolutely impossible. Did you not witness the pitiable consequences of our unwise endeavour ? Unnecessarily, thousands of soldiers were violently killed. Countless friends of ours were slain in the battle. The darling children of many mothers, the loving brothers of many sisters and the loving husbands of many noble women have slept in the lap of Time for ever. Countless noble women have been widowed, in the twinkling of an eye. Yet, what did we benefit from all this ? Mere defeat; mere disgrace and mere frustration ! We faced a humiliating defeat in the war; and we have been expelled from our own country. No, my dear heroes ! I do not want to repeat the blunder and cause the total decimation of the Rakshasa race". Sumali said in a voice charged with profound sorrow, heaving a long sigh.

"Then, what shall we do now, dear Lord !" somebody said summoning up courage.

"We have to spend sometime in this manner. We have to spend time with patience and peacefulness until a mighty warrior of incomparable militaric prowess is born in our Rakshasa dynasty. There is no use of impatience and anxiousness". Sumali thus spoke in grave and measured accents explaining his future policy.

“Dear brother ! If we remain quiet after this defeat will it not be a stain on the name of the Rakshasa race ? Will it not be a reproach on our heroism ?” Malyavan said in a tone of deep anguish.

“Malyavan ! do not lose heart. Do not be impatient. Now what we need most is farsightedness. We have to consider all events that take place in our lives from the point of view of the effect of our *Punya* (merit) and *Papa* (sins). When the power of our *Punya* is less whatever may be the endeavours that we put forth, the effect of sins paralyses the power of our *Punya*; and all our endeavours end in bitter frustration and failure. So, as long as the power of our *Punya* is less, we should remain patient and quiet, waiting for the right opportunity”. Sumali said in a determined voice, repeating his former statement.

“Then, shall we remain concealing ourselves from our enemies ?”

“Yes. Surely, that is exactly what we have to do now”.

“Have we to spend all our life in hiding ?”

“Do you think that life is meant only for fighting ?”

Malyavan became silent. Sumali advised the Rakshasa soldiers to go to Pathal Lanka.

Accordingly, led by Sumali, the King of the Rakshasas sought refuge in Pathal Lanka. As soon as reaching Pathal Lanka, Sumali took into his hands the reins of the administration. He organised his administration in accordance with new and noble standards. He began to rule over his country with justice, ethical excellence, magnanimity and ability.

Besides carrying out the administration of the country in an able manner, Sumali also enjoyed sensual delights in the company of his wife, Prithimati who embodied sweet love and was absolutely beautiful like a fairy's child. He desired that a son of exceptional valour and ability should be born to him so that he might hoist over the whole world the flag of honour and prestige of the Rakshasa dynasty.

In course of time, Prithimati became pregnant. The joy of Sumali and his wife knew no bounds. Prithimati took extraordinary care of the child that was growing in her womb. She observed limits, restraints and discipline in respect of food, sleep, movements and thoughts. As the child in her womb continued to develop, Prithimati's body bloomed into blissful dimensions; and auspicious thoughts and felicity increased in her; and at the proper time, she gave birth to a beautiful and radiant son.

The child was named Ratnashrava. Once upon a time, the practice was to name a child in accordance with his qualities or virtues. In accordance with this tradition, twentyfour Tirthankars were named. But now-a-days, the practice has been not to name them after their virtues but in accordance with the Zodiac sign. Now, probably, the practice also has been to name their children in accordance with their own i.e., the parents' own likes and preferences. A tin may contain oil; but it may bear the label "*Pure ghee*".

Ratnashrava was being brought up in the magnificent palace, in Pathal Lanka. With the idea of making the boy's future resplendent, Sumali engaged able and highly enlightened teachers to train him and to educate him properly even from his boyhood. They worked with a spirit of dedication to lay the foundations of excellent education in the boy. The boy was given expert training in the *Shastras* (scriptures) and in the use of *Astras* (weapons).

The river of time kept flowing. Transformations appeared in the life of the Prince. Having crossed boyhood, Ratnashrava entered the phase of youth. He grew impatient to fill his life with materialistic enjoyments, pleasures and prosperity.

One who utilizes his youth, wealth and beauty for the adoration of *Dharma* and for the attainment of spiritual elevation, is a *Mahatma*; but one who uses them for the attainment of sensual pleasures and physical delights is a mere *Jivatma*.

As soon as Ratnashrava found himself seated on the free and flying horse of buoyant and bubbling youth, the winds of

his fancies opened and they began to range freely, impetuously to the ends of the universe. There arose in his mind the over-leaping ambition of attaining extraordinary materialistic prosperity and pleasures. There arose in the ocean of his heart a mighty commotion of the clashing waves of countless desires and ambitions. Once, he revealed his ambitions and desires to his teacher, Kulachandra.

“Dear child ! In order to conquer the whole world, physical strength, materialistic prosperity and exceptional valour are not the only necessary things; on the contrary, you must acquire mastery over certain arts and techniques. As long as you do not acquire mastery over them, all the other things are useless”. Kulachandra said this restraining the Prince’s overweening ambition.

“Revered Gurudev ! What should I do in order to attain mastery over those arts and skills ?”

“Dear child ! In order to attain mastery over such arts, techniques and *Mantras* and supernatural powers, you must discipline your bodily propensities and restrain your sensual cravings. This is absolutely essential”.

“I am perfectly ready to do so. You kindly guide me to pursue the path that leads to the attainment of my ambitions”. Ratnashrava said in a tone of eagerness, placing his forehead on the feet of his teacher.

Kulachandra said this by way of giving him the necessary guidance.

“*You must find a place of absolute solitude to carry out meditation.

*You need the prescribed *asanas* and *mudras* (the right postures) in order to attain physical firmness and discipline.

*You must learn to recite the *mantras* clearly.

*You must get a true knowledge of the objectives which you propose to achieve”.

Thus, Kulachandra explained to him the real nature and the efficacy of the powers that can be attained by means of *Mantras*.

On an auspicious day, Ratnashrava, obtained the blessings of his parents; and set off from Pthal Lanka in order to achieve supernatural powers, by means of *Mantras* and occult arts.

Ratnashrava entered a beautiful garden by name Kusumodyan which was situated outside the city. He was full of thoughts relating to the guidance given by his teacher. It fully pervaded his personality and kept resounding in every beat of his pulse. He began to look for an appropriate time for beginning his meditation. He liked very much the serene place beneath a peepal tree which stood in the North-east of the garden (*Isanya*). He entered the chump of bushes beneath the Ashoka tree, selected a suitable place and purified the place by washing it with water fetched in a basin from a nearby pond.

After that, he folded his hands, remembered his deities with heartfelt devotion; and when lofty contemplations arose in his mind; with an elated mind, he sat upon the chosen spot; and sitting in the lotus posture (*Padmasan*) concentrating his eyes on the edge of his nose, he began to recite the prescribed *Mantras*. Within a short while, he was deeply absorbed into that strange world of *Mantras* and *Tantras* (occult arts).

Ratnashrava who sat thus deeply absorbed in meditation resembled a statue carved out of some invaluable stone. He sat absolutely silent and still. He was absolutely motionless. Every organ of his; nay, every hair on his body was still and motionless. Moments, *ghatikas*, hours, days, weeks and months came and went. But Ratnashrava did not show any changefulness or impatience in his endeavours to achieve his objectives.

When a person grows impatient and listless for the attainment of his objectives, he loses his mental calmness, firmness and competence; and there appears agitation in his mind. So, soon his endeavours will be frustrated. The desire for the fruits becomes totally frustrated and he begins to throw the

blame upon the endeavours and upon those who showed the path like a bad carpenter who quarrels with his own tools.

Ratnashrava had reached the climax of meditation and was totally absorbed in it. At that time, a youthful damsel of angelic beauty happened to come there. While passing, she paused for a moment, all of a sudden. Her steps automatically stopped. She fixed her eyes upon the young man who sat absorbed in meditation. She felt greatly fascinated by the beautiful appearance of Ratnashrava who was resplendent like the King of gods. She stood there spell-bound, lost in an infatuated contemplation of his fascinating appearance. She stood thus watching him intently for a few moments; then she approached Ratnashrava slowly, with soft steps and said in a sweet voice :

“Oh thou valiant hero ! Thou art the best of men. I am a beautiful damsel with extraordinary powers. I am immensely pleased with your unexampled meditation and contemplation. Open your eyes and look at me for a moment”

As soon as the soft words of the youthful damsel fell upon his ears, Ratnashrava realised that he had achieved his objectives of attaining supernatural powers. He was greatly amazed. He stopped reciting the *Mantras* and opened his eyes. Then he noticed a damsel of unexampled beauty standing before him. He was spell-bound at the sight of her beauty.

Very soon, he realised that his endeavours had been frustrated. He became deeply agitated. Looking angrily at that damsel he said :

“Who are you ? What is your purpose in coming here ?”

The Vidyadhara damsel sat down upon the clean ground straight in front of Ratnashrava and said :

“Darling young man ! There is a beautiful and fascinating place called Kautukmangal in a valley among the hills and caves of the Vaithadhya mountain, famous throughout the world. The ruler of that area is Vyomabindu, a Vidyadhar. His nature is signified by his name. He is supremely radiant and valiant.

He has two daughters who are beautiful like Rambha and Urvashi, the heavenly dancers. One is called Kaushika; and the other is called Kaikasi. Kaushika has been married to King Vishrava, the king of Vidyadhars of Yakshapura. His son, Vaishravan, a Vidyadhar is the King of Lanka. I am Kaikasi, the younger daughter of Vyomabindu, the most valiant hero and a great man".

"Once a certain astrologer came to Kautukmangal. He was a great scholar and was an indisputable master of astrology. When my father asked him about my future, he told my father; "Ratnashrava, the noble son of Sumali, the king of the Rakshasas and the ruler of Pathal Lanka, will marry your daughter".

"Dear young man, is he now in Pathal Lanka".

"Yes! He is in Pathal Lanka; but he is carrying on a deep meditation sitting beneath a peepal tree in the Kusumodyan garden in order to achieve extraordinary magical and supernatural powers".

"My dearest lord! Hearing the prediction made by the astrologer, my father was overwhelmed with joy. Therefore, he himself prompted me to come here. Indeed, I feel supremely blessed to-day".

On seeing that divinely beautiful damsel; and hearing her words, Ratnashrava experienced a delightful thrill which shot to the brims of his being with electric rapidity. Impetuous waves of joy rolled through his heart and he felt elated to the heights of joy. Kaikasi also was deeply infatuated with Ratnashrava who was a young man of extraordinary valour and splendour. Ratnashrava, at once, sent for his relatives, friends and colleagues. He got a magnificent city built called Pushpantar in that very place; married Kaikasi and began to spend his life in physical enjoyments and sensual pleasures, in her company. It was like two mighty and impetuous rivers flowing through the same valley; inevitably converging, uniting with a clash of waves and then flowing together like a single river, sublimely indifferent to the concerns of life.

Once, Kaikasi lay in deep sleep on her cot, in her richly decorated sleeping-chamber, in the magnificent palace of Pushpantar. The lamps that had been studded with gems, were glimmering in the chamber. Every corner of the chamber had been illuminated by the dim light of the lamps. The attendants were waving fans which had been decked with pearls and precious stones. Incense — bearing breezes blew from the west. The night had entered the last phase; and the Queen was flying through the firmament of dreams.

She had a strange dream. In her dream, she saw a lion tearing off the infatuated temples of a mighty elephant. The elephant seemed to enter its mouth.

Within a moment, her dream ended; and she woke up thrilled by her dream. As she remembered her dream, a strange feeling shot through her veins. She began to spend the remaining part of the night in some noble and lofty contemplations; and kept eagerly awaiting the arrival of the dawn. As soon as the day dawned, she left her chamber; and went into the chamber of her husband. Seeing the Queen Kaikasi who was in great agitation, Ratnashrava tried to be cheerful and to cheer her up. He asked her to be seated near him.

"My dear lord! In the early morning, I saw a splendid dream. Since then I have been palpitating with anxiety". She said.

"Dearest! What did you see in your dream?"

"In my dream, I saw a lion tearing off the infatuated temples of a mighty elephant; and the elephant passing into its mouth".

"Excellent! Really excellent! Oh dear queen! Very soon you are going to give birth to a son of exceptional valour and heroism. This is what your dream signifies".

"My lord! May your words come true".

As soon as Queen Kaikasi became pregnant, Ratnashrava began to organize many rituals and celebrations, in the Jin temples. He rendered charity to the helpless and the needy,

by giving them the gifts of food, clothes and money. He got the city of *Pushpantar* decorated so that it looked like the queen of cities. He gave very valuable presents to workers and officials. Kaikasi began to take great care of the child in her womb. In course of time, her thoughts, feelings and activities began to reveal clearly the nature of the child that was going to be born to her.

Great changes appeared in her propensities and actions. Her words and utterances which used to be soft and tender formerly became stern and violent. She began to behave wildly and cruelly with everyone. The servants and the attendants began to shudder with fear at the very sight of her. If anyone made any mistake, his days would come to an end. If anyone slighted her commands, it was a veritable invitation to *Yama*, the god of death. As the child in her womb kept developing, her body also developed and bloomed. A tremendous change appeared in her physical strength, stolidity and beauty. Though there was a large mirror in her chamber, she did not look into it even by a mistake. She always carried a sword in her hands. Her face instead of being tender and sweet, was haughty, arrogant and awe-inspiring. Now, she always looked at her face as reflected on the shining blade of her sharp sword.

She did not like to sit upon the ground at any time. She always sat upon a golden throne, like an emperor, in an overbearing posture. There appeared a peculiar kind of wilfulness and pride in her voice and actions. She loudly reprimanded the members of her family, without any reason. At all times, she uttered heroic war-cries. She completely discarded all her politeness and discernment. She walked with her body straightened and with her head held high in a haughty twist; and when she sat down, she assumed a posture of pride and conceit. She had an impulse to trample upon the heads of enemies. She began to dream of decimating masses of human beings and to bathe in their hot and steaming blood.

Months and seasons passed.

The time came for delivering the child.

At a certain predestined moment, she gave birth to a male child.

Soon after being born, the boy displayed a tremendous valour and heroism. There lay a large box nearby. In it there lay a garland of gems, which his ancestors had secured. On account of its splendour every object in the chamber appeared resplendent.

All of a sudden, the child took up the garland of gems; and began to screech with intense joy. For a while, he played with it; and then he wore it around his neck. The attendants who watched this event were greatly amazed. They kept looking on with their eyes opened wide with astonishment. Kaikasi was stupefied with astonishment on seeing this unexpected event.

When Ratnashrava came to see his son, in the sleeping chamber, Kaikasi narrated to him the extraordinary valour of the child. "My dear Lord! Our darling child has with amazing ease taken up and worn the magnificent garland of gems which was once presented to our ancestor, Meghavahan by the Emperor of Rakshasas; which was installed here by the greatest gods and which the members of our family have been worshipping through generations with devotion; and which could not be taken up by any power in this universe, earthly or celestial".

Ratnashrava fixed his eyes on the tremendously radiant face of his son which outshone the radiance of the sun-god. He saw the garland of gems around the neck of his son. He also saw the face of his son reflected in the nine gems on the garland. He thought for a while and said, to Kaikasi :

"My dear queen! When I see these ten faces of our son, I feel that it would be appropriate to name him *Dashmukh* (The ten-headed one)".

Accordingly, the child was named *Dashmukh*. Actually, how relevant and logical this truth is! It is natural that the radiant face of the child should be reflected in the nine radiant gems in the garland. Only on account of that reason, Ravan could be called *Dashmukh* or *Dashgriva* (the ten-headed one).

But some, not realizing this truth, have described Ravan as a being of ten heads and twenty hands. This is really funny. After all, Ravan was a human being.

On that very occasion, Ratnashrava said to his queen remembering the past events : "Dearest one ! This event took place once. My honoured father once went on a pilgrimage to Suvarnachal. There, he happened to meet a great *Muni*. The Muniraj possessed the power of *Manahparyavajnan* i.e., the supra-sensory power of seeing and knowing with the mind. My father saluted him and said to him politely : "Gurudev ! Who will wear the garland of nine gems which is in our palace ?" The great *Muni* replied : "The one that will wear that garland will become the emperor of Bharath and he will be known as *Ardha Chakravarthi*".

When the prediction of the great *Muni* came true, there arose mighty waves of joy and jubilation in the heart of Ratnashrava. Kaikasi also was delighted and elated to hear that her son had a splendid future; and that he was destined to perform mighty feats of heroism.

After Dashmukh, two other sons were born to Ratnashrava. They were embodiments of exceptional radiance, valour, and beauty. One was named Kumbhakarna and the other was named Vibhishan.

IV

THE JOURNEY TO THE BHIMARANYA

The radiant chariot of the sun-god was declining behind the western horizon. The radiance of the sun was declining and growing dull and dim in the sky. The goddess of the evening was decorating the sky with patterns and designs of various glorious colours. Even the Pathal Lanka looked fascinating with this gorgeous display of decorative designs.

Queen Kaikasi sat on her golden throne studded with precious stones, in the balcony of her magnificent palace built of beautiful marble; and was taking rest. Dashmukh, Kumbhakarna and Vibhishan were playing games nearby. Kaikasi kept watching her sons with fixed eyes. She kept wandering in the ideal world of her imagination; and began to build a magnificent mansion of the future with her radiant aspirations.

All of a sudden, the three boys began to look towards the sky with fixed eyes. They were watching a fascinating supernatural airship flying through the sky.

“Mother dear ! Who is flying in that airship ?” Dashmukh asked his mother with ebullient eagerness.

“Your brother !” Kaikasi replied in a calm tone.

“Our brother ! No. It cannot be true. The three of us are playing here. Who is this fourth one ?”

“He is your half-brother. He is the son of my sister. He is Vaishnavan, the son of my sister i.e. your aunt, Kaushika”, Kaikasi said. The three brothers were till now unaware of the

existence of this brother of theirs. They never knew that they had another brother. He was their half-brother; and now they heard about him.

Kaikasi said this about that brother of theirs: "Dear children! You have an aunt. She and I are the daughters of Vyomabindu, the valiant emperor of Vidyadhars. Kaushika is his first daughter; and I am his younger daughter. Kaushika was married to Vishrava, the king of Vidyadhars. In course of time, she gave birth to a son. He was by birth radiant and valiant. He was named Vaishravan. He grew up to be a young man of extraordinary abilities and accomplishments. He mastered all the arts and sciences. Indra, the emperor of the Vidyadhars was astonished by his exceptional talents and attainments. Indra reposed great trust and confidence in him; and he was loyal and faithful to Indra. He came to be considered as one of the ablest warriors of Indra, the unique king".

"But dear mother! How did Vaishravan become the king of Lanka?" Dashmukh asked his mother in a serious and grave tone, interrupting her.

Kaikasi heaved a deep and long sigh; glanced at her sons; and then said in a heavy and sad voice.

"I am also saying the same thing. All the Vidyadhars residing in Vaithadhya were greatly fascinated by the fame and popularity of Indra, the king of Vidyadhars. All of them became his loyal and faithful followers, with the result that Indra's arrogance and sense of self-importance knew no bounds. Your grand-father's elder brother, Mali became vexed and agitated when he heard about the story of Indra's fame. His arrogance filled him with apprehensions. He got wild with rage; and without any provocation he invaded Ratanupur. Sumali tried his best to prevent the war. At the time of setting off on the campaign, many bad omens were witnessed. He pointed them out to Mali; and prevailed upon him to give up his plan of invading Ratanupur. But he did not pay heed to his warnings. Consequently, a terrible war took place between Indra and Mali, your grand-father. Countless Vanara warriors and

Rakshasa warriors were killed in the war; and finally your grand-father Mali also was slain. The Rakshasas and the Vanaras experienced a humiliating defeat. Indra made his loyal and faithful warrior Vaishnavan the king of Lanka; and handed over the kingdom of Lanka to him; and we utterly despondent, had to take refuge in Pathal Lanka”.

“Alas! We lost the kingdom of Lanka! The Rakshasa dynasty came to be derided by people. The accomplishments of the Rakshasas, their progress and prosperity were destroyed and cast in the dust; and your grand-father and father have been spending days in Pathal Lanka in a pitiable manner, waiting for an opportunity to regain their lost kingdom. My heart breaks when I think of the miserable condition of the Rakshasa dynasty. I often feel that death is preferable to this disgraceful existence. Our enemies are ruling over Lanka; and we in utter helplessness have been leading a miserable existence, here in Pathal Lanka. What a terrible irony of fate! What a mockery of nature!

And all of a sudden, fire and fiery flames began to rain from Kaikasi's eyes. Her fair and white face began to flame red with anger; and she began to shake with indignation. She spoke in a thundering voice:

“Until I see the plunderers of Lanka licking the dust in utter disgrace; and until I see those plunderers begging for food in the lanes and streets of Lanka, I cannot have peace of mind. My dearest children! Tell me when I will become the greatest of all mothers in this world? When will it be known throughout the world that my sons have attained immortal fame as mighty heroes? I have grown weak mentally and physically, cherishing these aspirations which are like sky-flowers. My beautiful body has become withered and now I am but a skeleton. I fear that the time has come for my losing my eyes because of ceaseless weeping and the flow of tears like cataracts”.

On hearing her words filled with anguish, the three youngsters were greatly moved; and their hearts broke, in pieces. For a few moments all were silent. Silence and stillness prevail-

ed everywhere. There was pin-drop silence. Vibhishan took her hand in his; and said in a voice, shaken with emotion. "Mother dear ! What is the use of shedding tears now ? Aren't you aware of the valour of your dear sons ? We are ready to dispel your grief within a fraction of a second. Why we three? Your eldest son, my noble brother, Dashmukh can carry out this task alone and unaided. Indra stands nowhere before him in heroism and valour. Compared to his prowess and heroism Vaishnavan and the other Vidyadhars are absolutely powerless. Can they ever face him at all ? Never, mother, never ! They are all petty and incapable before him. Let alone my noble brother, Dashmukh; my other brother Kumbhakarna can cut off the heads of all our enemies and can decimate them, single-handed. When you have such capable sons, why should you grieve ?"

He glanced towards Kumbhakarna and Dashmukh expectantly. Even the boy, Vibhishan showed his determination to dispel the dark clouds of despair and grief that had enveloped the mind of his mother.

"Dear mother ! If you command me, I am ready to set out at once, without a moment's delay to decimate all our enemies. Only I am waiting for your command".

When Kaikasi heard these words, she was overwhelmed with joyful emotions. She admiringly, took up her son, Vibhishan; and placed him in her lap. Embracing him affectionately she rained kisses upon his cheeks, lips, neck and his magnificent head and hair.

"Dear children ! Only seeing your heroic and valiant faces I have been living : Otherwise....."

All of a sudden, infuriated with anger, gnashing his teeth, Dashmukh said in a thundering voice. "Mother dear ! Do not worry. Do not give way to grief and despair. Utter ruin will seize those that have caused this grief to you. Woe unto those that have thus grieved you ! One unfailing blow of my adamant fist is enough to make them lick the dust. With one

kick, I will blow that wicked Indra's empire to smithereens. I do not need any weapons, dear mother ! I possess invincible physical strength and immortal courage. I will destroy his empire and decimate him and all his Vidyadhars with a single wave of my hand which possesses the strength of millions of elephants". Dashmukh tried to cheer up his dejected mother by displaying his tremendous, strong arms and his adamant physical strength, and he added : "Mother, I have to acquire mastery over all the traditional arts and accomplishments of our line".

"Dear son ! What you say is absolutely true. If you have to fight against the enemy who is a master of all militaric skills and accomplishments, mere physical strength is not enough. You have to carry out serious endeavours and attain mastery over the various militaric arts and accomplishments".

"But mother, in order to carry out those endeavours, I have to go to a forest".

"Are you afraid of going to a forest ?"

"No such thing..... yet"

"Dear son ! Give up for the time being the idea of going to a forest. If I cannot see you even for a moment, I feel that the sap of my life dries away. I cannot bear with separation from you even for a moment".

"Mother dear ! I am really amazed to hear you too speak thus. You are the mother of mighty heroes ! The mother of mighty heroes should never entertain fears or give way to despair. How could you ever entertain such fears ?" Dashmukh said stamping the ground with his feet.

Kaikasi kept staring at the radiant face of her son for a few moments. Her eyes sparkled with a new-born joy. Descending from her throne, she affectionately embraced Dashmukh. Dashmukh, Kumbhakarna and Vibhishan saluted their mother by placing their foreheads upon her feet. They touched her feet; and sought her blessings. Kaikasi who was greatly delighted, blessed her sons heartily. Then, the brothers went to meet their grand-father, Sumali and their father, Ratnashrava.

"Grand-father ! Kindly give us your consent", said Dashmukh.

Sumali and Ratnashrava were greatly stunned to hear what he said. They were astonished by Dashmukh's voice and bearing.

"Dear child ! To what should I give my consent ?"

"We wish to go to the forest *Bhimaranya* to attain mastery over militaric and royal arts and accomplishments", Dashmukh said, explaining his purpose.

Sumali and Ratnashrava glanced at each other. They exchanged their thoughts by means of glances and signs. Making the three children sit by his side, stroking affectionately their lovely locks of hair which shone like pure gold, Sumali said, in a serious and dignified tone :

"Dear children ! Attaining mastery over militaric arts and accomplishments is not a joke. In order to attain those accomplishments, you will have to carry out arduous austerities and heroic endeavours with inexhaustible endurance. You will have to face various kinds of impediments and calamities. I do not at all mean that you do not possess the necessary strength of mind and will power; or that you are incapable of facing and overcoming those impediments and calamities. That is not at all the meaning of what I say; yet, you have always to be cautious about this point. When you begin endeavouring to achieve any skill or accomplishment, you will have to face many hard trials and arduous ordeals. Terrible impediments and calamities may arise and rend your heart and paralyse your determination. They may even stun you and stupefy you; and such unhappy and undesirable calamities may arise as will break your heart and undermine your determination. At such times, you must remain firm, undaunted and unflinching like the stolid *Meru* mountain; and you must retain your determination. Even by a mistake, you should not allow any breach to occur in your meditation and concentration. You should not lose your firmness or patience even for a moment. Only then can you achieve your objectives of wearing around your neck the garland of accomplishments, success and prosperity". Sumali

paused for a few moments to regain his breath. Then he waited for a moment. He wiped his moist eyes with his upper cloth. He looked at his grand-sons with fixed eyes; and putting together the broken strands of his words, he said again :

“My dearest children. My conscience tells me that you are going to be surely successful, and that you will become indisputable masters of innumerable accomplishments, militaric arts and skills. You may go to the Bhimaranya. You set off at an auspicious time. My heartfelt wishes for your success and my blessing will always be there to give you strength. But here is one vital point. Before setting off to Bhimaranya, you must worship Lord Shantinath and pray for his grace. You should never forget this duty”.

Then, Sumali embraced the three youngsters affectionately; kissed their heads with love; stroked their backs softly; and then bade them good-bye, in a voice shaken by emotion.

The news that the three princes were planning to go to the Bhimaranya to attain mastery over the various arts, accomplishments and skills; spread everywhere. Large numbers of well-wishers gathered in the magnificent grounds in front of the palace to bid good-bye to the three princes who were about to set off to the Bhimaranya. The citizens also gathered on the two sides of the streets to cheer the princes and to wish them success and prosperity in their endeavours.

Kaikasi decorated the radiant foreheads of her sons with *Kumkum tilak*; placed in their hands some auspicious fruits; and accompanied them upto the main gate of the palace. At the main gate of the palace had gathered, Sumali, their grandfather, Ratnashrava, their father, Prajnanidhi, the Chief Minister and a large number of others. The court-priest blessed the princes by reciting the relevant *Mantras*. Auspicious songs were sung by sweet-voiced girls.

The three princes took leave of all of them in a humble and polite manner. All shouted : “Victory to Bhagwan Shantinath” and their cries reverberated in the horizons.

Outside, there were two chariots ready. Dashmukh sat in one; and in the other sat Kumbhakarna and Vibhishan. The two chariots began to move slowly through the main roads of Pathal Lanka; on both sides of the roads, large numbers of people had gathered. Some raised their hands; some flung holy rice-grains over them; some saluted them with politeness, folding their hands; some rained flowers on them from the balconies; and some shouted; "Victory to the princes". Thus the citizens of Pathal Lanka gave them a hearty farewell.

Soon after crossing the boundaries of the city, the chariots proceeded towards the Bhimaranya, with the speed of wind. Sumali, their grandfather; and Ratnashrava their father were lost in the sweet dreams of regaining their Kingdom of Lanka.

The chariots travelled with lightning speed and reached the Bhimaranya; and then with a jerk, the chariots stopped. The three brothers alighted from the chariots. Soon after that, the charioteers drove the chariots back to Pathal Lanka.

After having offered an invocation to their family deities and to their ancestors, they entered the dense forest. Dashmukh was going ahead with Vibhishan and Kumbhakarna following him. They proceeded thus looking towards the four directions, searching for a suitable place for carrying out their endeavours. Thus, they entered the central part of the thick forest. Suddenly, a huge python crawled between the legs of Kumbhakarna. He seized it with his hand; and threw it away as if it was a piece of string. Just then, they happened to hear a ferocious lion, the king of beasts, roaring somewhere in the forest. Kumbhakarna replied with a thundering roar that cracked the skies.

"Kumbhakarna ! When you are absorbed in meditation and penance you should not roar thus for any reason", Dashmukh warned him.

"Brother ! He will not sit quiet even in meditation" said Vibhishan glancing towards Kumbhakarna. All of a sudden, Kumbhakarna spread his claws and hit Vibhishan in the vitals.

"Oh God I am dying !" cried Vibhishan and fell at the feet of Kumbhakarna. But soon Vibhishan performed such a

feat that the next moment the fat and heavy Kumbhakarna was seen licking the dust. Dashmukh who was serious smiled on seeing this merry encounter between his younger brothers.

Dashmukh chose a place covered with fine greenery beneath a huge tree as fit for carrying out their endeavours.

One by one, the three brothers sat there, in a proper order.

They wore white robes necessary for carrying out *Jap* and *Tap* (recitations and austerities); and sat down there. They took the garlands of beads (*Japmalas*) in their hands; and then concentrating their eyes on the edges of their noses, they were soon absorbed in a profound contemplation, reciting with an extraordinary concentration, the *Ashtakshari Mantra* (the eight lettered Mantra).

The goddess of the night wrapped the whole world with a dark cover. Stars began to twinkle in the sky. The speed of wind kept gradually increasing. The ferocious cries and roars of wild animals that filled the atmosphere inspired fear in those who heard them. Every aspect and object of the forest shook with the ferocious cries and roars of wild animals. But the three brothers were plunged in a meditation, in their endeavour to attain mastery over the various arts, sciences and accomplishments and were reciting the *Ashtakshari Mantra* with concentration. After two *Prahars* of the night passed (one prahar = three hours) they attained that accomplishment; and their joy knew no bounds.

Soon after that they began to recite the *Shodashakshari Mantra*. They had to recite that *Mantra* ten crore and one thousand times. They were reciting the *Mantra* with firm concentration and absolute serenity.

What accomplishments, arts or skills cannot be attained by those who possess firmness of concentration and an unflinching determination and who enjoy the grace and blessings of gods and spiritual heads ? What objective cannot be achieved by such men ? Even to pursue the path of salvation only two things are essential. The soul that is determined to destroy its *Karmas*

can by means of the supremely efficacious weapon of the grace of gods and the Gurudev, within a trice of time, destroy the cloud of fear and attain its objectives. But probably, supreme accomplishments cannot be attained without the necessity of facing and overcoming serious impediments and calamities.

The testing time for the three princes came.

The demi-god by name Anadrut who was the King of Jambudweep by chance came down to earth with demi-goddesses to enjoy himself in sports and games. He came to that spot in the *Bhimaranya* where the three brothers sat in meditation.

He was greatly amazed and astonished when he saw the three young men who were like heavenly beings seated there absorbed in deep meditation. A strong desire arose in his heart. He decided to test the mental strength and determination of the three princes.

Accordingly, he drew the attention of his companion-goddesses towards those youngsters; and said in a grave tone;

“Do you see these youngsters sitting like statues in meditation ?”

“These three are like great *Tapasvis* to look at. They are yet like children that suckle milk from their mother’s breast. They are not even adolescents; and even moustaches have not appeared on their lips”. The demi-goddesses said looking at the princes, with their eyes open wide with astonishment.

“Don’t be crazy. Discarding your wonder and impatience, test the firmness of these youngsters with all your fascinating and infatuating arts and guiles. Let us see whether they are pure gold or artificial gold. Test this with all severity”.

“So this is the matter. We have dashed down to smithereens the self-discipline and self-restraint of highly distinguished and majestic gods themselves, by our infatuating and inebreating attractions? After all these are ordinary, petty mortals. What capacity do they have to vie with us and to

remain unshaken by our fascinations? See! If we do not at once break their meditation and concentration, we are not *Devanganas* (demi-goddesses)."

The demi-goddesses joined together cheerfully and surrounded the three princes who sat absorbed in deep meditation. They stood stupefied like statues motionless and still amazed at the astounding beauty of Dashmukh, Vibhishan and Kumbhakarna.

What did they want to do? What happened? Strange and mysterious are the ways of fate! Man proposes something but Destiny disposes. The ways of Destiny go against the wishes of human beings. Instead of shaking the firmness of the princes, the demi-goddesses themselves became enslaved and enthralled by the astounding beauty of the appearance of the youngsters. Seeing the princes who sat in deep meditation above all aberrations and infatuations, the demi-goddesses themselves became infatuated with their magnificent appearance; and became victims of a maddening passion.

"Oh you devotees! Open your eyes for a moment. Glance at our angelic beauty but once. We are *Devanganas* (Angels) but we have been mesmerically infatuated with a blinding passion at the sight of your divinely graceful faces and your unexampled endeavours. We stand here spell-bound by your fascinating appearance. What higher achievement can you wish for than the favour and ardour of angelic beings like us whose beauty and grace are unparalleled."

Hearing their voices of complaint even the wild animals and inhabitants of the forest stopped all their cries and commotion; but their voice could not penetrate the hearts of those princes. They remained in the state of deep meditation unperturbed by their cries and complaints.

The *Devanganas* found to their bitter frustration that their tall claims had totally failed and now they began to cast another set of dice. They adopted another trick.

"Oh Princes! You possess such tender and comely bodies.... Why do you inflict such pain upon them? Why are you endur-

ing this severe pain ? Alas ! Why are you wasting your unexampled beauty and tender grace in this manner ? What is the benefit you get from those accomplishments to attain which you are carrying these austere endeavours not caring even to glance at our fascinating grace and beauty ? Oh ! You mad fellows, at least, once you glance at us. We are angelic beings of extraordinary beauty and we are ready to surrender ourselves body and soul at your feet and to be yours for ever and for ever. Oh you who have stolen our hearts ! Come on and bind us in your warm embraces. We will all join together and like spirits, we shall fly and visit all the beautiful places in the three worlds; and let us enjoy physical and sensual pleasures for ages and ages, and spend our lives in nameless felicities. Why do you waste your youth thus ? Let us gather roses while we may. In delay there lies no bliss; Come kiss us and enjoy the sweetness of bliss !”

But all their efforts were in vain; absolutely in vain. All their efforts to disturb the meditation of the princes; and to attract their attention totally failed. All their entreaties and amorous advances and their passionate appeals failed to attract the attention of the youngsters. They were as silent and still and unresponsive as stone-images. The agitation of the *Devanganas* knew no bounds. Repeatedly, they continued to make entreaties; but the princes did not budge even an inch.

A single palm cannot by itself produce a clapping noise. Clapping needs two palms. The one-sided ardour of the *Devanganas* was of no use. They felt balked. Then, Anadrutdev decided to test the princes, himself.

He spoke in a voice that was more stolid than the Meru mountain. “Oh you ignorant boys ! Why have you undertaken this painful and futile endeavour ? I think some villain, with an evil intention, has beguiled you into this fruitless, futile but painful endeavour only to punish you. Go away. Run away from here. Go home and render devoted service to your father and mother. That will surely bring you some auspicious fruit. These tender and youthful bodies of yours are not to be wasted

in agonising endeavours. Ask for what you desire. I will satisfy all your aspirations in the twinkling of an eye."

Anadrutdev was silent for a while, to see what effect his words might produce on the princes. He thought that his words expressive of his capacity to fulfil their aspirations would attract the minds of the youngsters and that thus their meditation and concentration would be disturbed, at once. But that was only his conjecture. The princes sat undisturbed carrying out their meditation and *Japa* with unshakable absorption. There was not even the slightest change in their faces. So, he felt greatly irritated. Every part of his body shook on account of his intense anger. He was greatly agitated with shame. He again said in a roaring voice :

"Oh you idiots ! When a god like me is here ready to grant your wishes pleased with your penances, you are sitting like images carved out of stone. Whom do you want to please by this unceasing *Japa* of yours ?"

When he gave a suggestion by means of a sign, to his followers and companions, they assumed dreadful and monstrous forms. Within a few moments, there came about a great change in the atmosphere. Suddenly, dark, dense clouds appeared in the sky and enveloped it completely and a terrible storm rose which seemed to shake the very solid earth itself. The winds began to blow furiously. Lightnings flashed; and thunders rolled. A dreadful darkness enveloped the trees in the forest. One could not see one's own hands. The followers and companions of Anadrutdev, having assumed monstrous forms, began to cause impediments to the meditation of the youngsters, in various ways. They dealt resounding blows to the youngsters; and rained upon them rocks and stones torn from huge rocks which tumbling down fell around in mighty heaps. Some of those heavenly beings assumed the forms of terrible, black serpents and just as they coil round sandal trees; hold them tight to the point of breaking them, they coiled round the bodies of the three youngsters tightening them in their dreadful embrace; and endeavoured to crush their bodies. The sky began to echo with terrible and heart-breaking cries; yet the princes remained un-

perturbed, serene and still deeply absorbed in their meditation. Those terrible impediments and dreadful calamities did not disturb them even to the least extent.

Some of the heavenly beings assumed the form of ferocious lions and pounced upon them, intent upon tearing them to pieces and crushing them in their dreadful jaws. The lions roared and growled with their hair standing on their ends and bristling with wildness and ferocity. Within the twinkling of an eye, they held the princes in their dreadful claws. Yet they remained calm and serene like the Pacific ocean.

The heavenly beings assumed the form of ferocious wolves; and pounced upon the youngsters, intent upon tearing off their tender bodies with their deadly claws. But they could not even touch them.

Then, they assumed the forms of such harmful creatures of the forest, as tom-cats, rats, scorpions and other poisonous creatures and tried their best to disturb their meditation. But all their efforts were, in vain. They were bitterly frustrated. The princes were so absolutely firm and motionless in their proximity to the *Mantra devatas* the great deities that can bestow tremendously efficacious boons, that they were totally unaware of what was happening around them in the outer world.

Even to attain physical and materialistic pleasures and prosperity, people have to work with tremendous concentration and determination; and when that is so, those who aim at the attainment of supernatural and otherworldly accomplishments have to possess superhuman determination and concentration. Those who feel agitated and disturbed by impediments and who are daunted by calamities cannot attain any worldly or other worldly objectives. Actually, one can attain prosperity or supernatural powers only by bearing with such impediments and calamities with an unflinching determination and concentration.

Anadrut was wild with rage; and transgressed all limits. When all his attempts to disturb the meditation of the princes failed he felt bitterly humiliated; and it became a question of prestige and self-respect for him. He was not willing to admit

defeat. Actually, he was thunder-struck by his failure. He was not prepared to admit defeat saying, "The grapes are sour", like the jackal in the fable. One does not hesitate to do anything to safeguard one's prestige and self-respect.

Soon, by means of his magical powers, he created the forms of Kaikasi, Ratnashrava and Chandranakha. He tied up their hands behind their backs and tossed them up into the air. The heavenly beings who had assumed the forms of Kaikasi, Ratnashrava and Chandranakha began to groan and cry as if in anguish and agony. The tears streamed from their eyes like rain; and their voices became choked with anguish. They screamed in agony and horror and said in a pitiable voice :

"Dear son, Dashmukh ! Please stand up. Just as a hunter cruelly catches animals in his net; this villain has made us helpless and you are silently watching this ! Though you love us greatly, you are sitting like a wooden image when we are experiencing tremendous torture at the hands of this villain. It does not matter if your unexampled love and devotion for us have disappeared from your heart; but has even the spring of kindness gone dry ? What happened to your incomparable valour ? What happened to your tremendous strength ? Where is your heroism ? While you were in Pathal Lanka you used to brag of your valour and might. But where has all your heroism gone ?"

"Oh dear Kumbhakarna ! Can't you hear our groans and cries ? Have you become so deaf that you are sitting quiet, with your eyes closed ? Though on account of your huge and massive body you are like a large male-buffalo, you are sitting silent and helpless like a lean and rickety bullock. Are you not at all pained by the sight of our agony and helplessness ? Dear Vibhishan ! At least, you come to our rescue and save us from this torture; or have you too become a coward like your elder brothers ?" They continued to groan aloud.

Thus for a while, they kept crying and groaning in a heart-rending manner. But the princes did not budge even an inch. They sat in deep meditation. Dashmukh did not move; Kumbha-

karna remained firm and there was no question of Vibhishan being inveigled into believing these tricks. Seeing that all his tricks could not shake the concentration of the princes and could not disturb their ecstatic meditation even to the least extent, he began to adopt brutal plans.

By means of his magical powers, he cut off the heads of those magical Kaikasi, Ratnashrava and Chandranakha; and threw them before them. Blood flowing from those several heads began to flood the area before the princes. Even this did not disturb their meditation and concentration. Then, by means of his magical powers, he cut off the head of Kumbhakarna in front of Dashmukh; the head of Vibhishan in front of Kumbhakarna and the head of Dashmukh before Vibhishan mercilessly. But Ravan who possessed a knowledge of the supreme good, remained undisturbed. He remained unmoving like a mighty rock. But when Kumbhakarna and Vibhishan saw the severed head of their mighty elder brother rolling in the dust, within a few moments, they woke up from their ecstatic state, impelled by their affection for him.

Affection and emotional excitement made Kumbhakarna and Vibhishan forget for a while that what had occurred was merely a magical and artificial event.

All of a sudden, divine voices were heard in the sky :

“Blessed is he ! Blessed is he !”

He is the greatest. He is the greatest !”

When Anadrut and his followers heard those divine voices, their wonder and astonishment knew no bounds. They stood stupefied like stone-images. A divine halo of extraordinary splendour appeared in the sky. The divine splendour spread everywhere and rendered everything resplendent.

“Oh you heroic prince ! We are supremely pleased with your sublime devotion. Your objectives are achieved. All your aspirations have been fulfilled. We have come here to attend upon you”. Many divine voices uttered this simultaneously; and in a moment, one thousand Muses or deities presiding over

various kinds of learning, knowledge and accomplishments, appeared before him with folded hands, and bestowed upon him their boons.

Ravan who possessed inordinate strength of mind and superhuman heroism became the supreme master of one thousand accomplishments such as *Prajnapti*, *Rohini*, *Gowri*, *Gandhari*, *Akashgadini*, *Kamadayani*, *Kamayadini*, *Anima*, *Laghima*, *Akshobhya*, *Manastambhankarini*, *Suvidhata*, *Taporupa*, *Dehna*, *Vipoladari*, *Shubhaprada*, *Rajorupa*, *Dinaratrikarini*, *Vajrodari*, *Samakrishti*, *Adarshani*, *Amaramara*, *Analas-thambhani*, *Toyastambhani*, *Giridharini*, *Avalokani*, *Vanhi*, *Ghora*, *Dhira*, *Bhujangini*, *Yogeshwari*, *Chanda*, etc.

The Muses bestowed upon Kumbhakarna such accomplishments as *Samvridhi*, *Jambhrini*, *Sarvaharini*, *Vyomagadini*, and *Indrani*.

..

Vibhishan attained four great accomplishments, namely *Siddhartha*, *Shatrudamankarini*, *Nirvyaghata* and *Akashgadini*.

The three brothers were overwhelmed with joy and elation.

Anadrutdev felt greatly humiliated and disgraced. He began to shiver with the fear that he had to suffer dreadful punishment for his offences and atrocities. He was in a fix wondering what he should do to appease Ravan and be exonerated from his enormities.

V

RAVAN'S MARRIAGE

"Oh Mighty hero ! forgive me. I surrender myself at your feet. I seek your grace and mercy. In the future, I shall never commit such a blunder". Anadrutdev begged for Ravan's forgiveness with a bent head and folded hands.

"Why should you seek my forgiveness ? You never offended us ! In fact, you bestowed a great benefaction upon us. If you had not subjected us to those tremendous trials and ordeals by virtue of your supernatural powers, we would not have seen this day of glory and success". Ravan said this, in a voice shaken by emotion, taking Anadrutdev into his warm embrace.

"No. No. My Lord ! My followers and I, in sheer ignorance caused impediments to your meditation. We caused mental and physical violence to you; and you deem them benefactions".

"If they are not benefactions what else are they ?

"How so ?"

"Dear god ! If you had not caused those impediments to us in such an intense manner, and if you had not put our determination to the test thus, we would not have attained these extraordinary accomplishments so soon. Now, you tell us if they are not benefactions to us what else are they ?"

Within a few moments, Ravan and Andrutdev forgot the past events and began to laugh jubilantly.

Actually, great men possess magnanimity and large-heartedness. They forgive the offences of offenders soon with magna-

nimity. Even if they have committed unforgivable offences, they do not have even the slightest contempt or hatred for offenders. If in the same manner any offender commits offences again, they remember his past; and do not commit the unwise act of punishing him.

Great men do not even by a mistake treat with contempt an offender, remembering his past offensive actions; on the contrary, they give enough opportunities to him to rectify his errors and to reform himself. In such a situation, the offender deems it a supreme good fortune if he can, like a humble and devoted servant, render service to these great men. One who endeavours to become a great man does not think of this truth but he adopts it and step by step, he attains higher and higher levels of greatness.

Ravan knew this truth very well; hence he, at once, forgave Anadrutdev. Anadrutdev was astounded and stupefied by Ravan's magnanimity; and in consequence, he always remained a dedicated and loyal servant of Ravan.

Anadrutdev began to think of rendering some useful service to Ravan who was magnanimous and large-hearted so that he might remember him always; and so that he might not forget him.

All of a sudden, an idea flashed in his mind like a lightning.

"Why should I not transform this place where Ravan attained mastery over great arts and accomplishments, into a veritable heaven?"

This enthusiasm flowed through his veins like impetuous waves. So, within the twinkling of an eye, he transformed the Bhimaranya into a supremely splendid, supernatural and heavenly city, by means of his divine powers.

He named the city, *Swayamprabha*.

In the central part of the city, he created a magnificent mansion with sky-high towers. He got the palatial building built by means of various excellent sculptural decorations, and artistic engravings and carvings. It was a lordly mansion with

walls of burnished gold, so that no one could gaze on it with unblinded eyes. A magnificent harem rendered resplendent by the rare and radiant lustre of gems studded to the walls and the ceiling; a royally rich and spacious chamber where political discussions and deliberations could be carried out unhampered; a guest-house with choice paintings and long resounding corridors; a court with three magnificent gold thrones radiating a million colours from precious stones studded to them; and grand golden chairs for the courtiers and ministers; and various other chambers were created by Anadrutdev by virtue of his supernatural powers. The palace with all its decorations seemed to be a heavenly structure of exceptional artistic and sculptural excellence. He entreated the three princes to be seated on the thrones; and thus he revealed to them his astounding powers of imagination and wisdom. After that, he, by means of his supernatural power, produced before them for their entertainment, a devotional dance-sequence in which the heavenly damsels danced; and threw them into a stupor of amazement and delight. After the dance was over, he congratulated Dashmukh on his supernatural attainments; and then having taken leave of him, he disappeared with his followers as if melting into air, into the thin air. Before going away he suggested to Dashmukh that he should attain the sword called, "*Chandrahast*". Ravan again decided to pursue the path of austere endeavours to attain mightier powers and thus to hoist the flag of the fame of the Rakshasa dynasty; and to make it wave over the world, with indisputable supremacy. He again became deeply immersed in meditation, discarding food. Thus he spent one .. two .. three four five days. All the people of Patala Lanka experienced the impetuous impact of the severe *Tapasya* that Ravan was carrying out in a lonely place, with his mind and soul completely absorbed in meditation. Everywhere people were talking about it; everywhere the same topic was being discussed by people. Ravan and severe penance ! On the sixth day, as soon as the first rays of the sun shot from the eastern horizon and flattered the heaven-kissing mountains of the world, suddenly the whole sky became resplendent with a divine effulgence which seemed to illumine the darkest corners of the universe. The entire sky

became flooded with an astounding splendour; and soon, the divine sword, "*Chandrahās*" appeared before Ravan who clutched it at once with delight and elation.

As soon as he secured the sword, *Chandrahās*, Ravan ended his austerity and meditation. For a while, he sat firm in his seat; and then he opened his eyes. On one side, he saw his grandfather, Sumali standing there supremely pleased with his attainments and watching him with intent eyes glowing with unshaking lids. Sweet and happy smiles decked his face. On the other side stood his father, Ratnashrava watching his heroic son with limitless joy and admiration. Nearby, there stood his mother, Kaikasi and attendants, eager to embrace and bless her darling son. Ravan, at once, stood up; stepped forward with overflowing veneration and touched the feet of his elders and secured their heartfelt blessings, with his head bowed in devotion and affection. He added a feather to his cap; and enhanced his glory and reputation by entering the city of Swayamprabha in the company of the members of his family, ministers, courtiers and friends.

Three magnificently decorated chariots stood at the gate of the palace. Ravan sat in one; Kumbhakarna sat in the second one; and the serene Vibhishan sat in the third one.

The melodies emerging from various musical instruments reverberated in the atmosphere. Women sang auspicious songs; young girls stood in a line to rain flowers over the heads of the young princes. The people of the city swayed in elation and jubilation. Vast masses of people could be seen as far as one's eye could traverse. The entire sky began to reverberate with jubilant and triumphant cries and slogans of the people.

Blessed was the mother !

Blessed was the father !

Blessed were the princes !

Blessed was the Rakshasa dynasty !

Everywhere people talked about the same thing. They were admiring the exceptional abilities and virtues of the princes and

were glorifying the greatness of the Rakshasa dynasty. The chests of Sumali and Ratnashrava swelled with pride. The conquest of Lanka ! The time seemed to have come for the fulfilment of their aspiration to recapture their Kingdom of Lanka. They felt jubilant over the astounding achievements and the unexampled heroism of the young princes.

The sun was slowly declining to the west. The goddess of the night was slowly descending upon the earth covering it with a mantle of darkness. Silence and stillness swayed supreme everywhere. The noises and commotions of the day had completely subsided. At such a time, the three young princes sat around their mother in the harem. Her face was serious. She gently and affectionately passed her hand over the head of Vibhishan; and said :

“My darling children ! Now, I am reckoned among the greatest mothers in the world. Yet, I do not have peace of mind. Until I see the enemies of the Rakshasa dynasty licking the dust and until I see their aspirations crushed to smithereens. I cannot have peace of mind”.

“Mother ! Now, you will see the valour and abilities of your sons. Until we take revenge against our enemies for causing disgrace to our grand-father, Sumali and our father, Ratnashrava, and until we inflict untold miseries on the enemies of the Rakshasa dynasty, we will not have peace of mind. We are going to realize your dream within a short time”. Dashmukh Ravan said taking his mother's hand into his, perturbed over his mother's distress.

“Dear son ! I know it very well. You three will prove true to your words. Go to your beds. Sleep. The night is far advanced”.

The three princes got up. They saluted their mother; and then went to their respective chambers to sleep.

Then Kaikasi kept standing for sometime, lost in deep thoughtfulness. She felt that the world was now poised above time. She did not feel any need to puzzle out eternity; she felt

that she rose to some high skies and was floating gleefully on some mysterious waves of mesmeric impetuosity that seemed to take her to the ends of the universe. She then became aware of herself; dimmed the blazing lights; and slowly moved into her sleeping chamber; and sat on her cot. She offered a heartfelt prayer to her deities and Lord Shantinath; and then lay quiet on her bed. But she did not get sleep. As on other days, on this day also, she could not get sleep. She kept tossing and turning on her bed. But there was no sign of sleep at all. Again and again, thoughts relating to her sons kept rising in her mind like the ever-rising and never-ending waves of the sea. Naturally, she kept thinking of the future of her sons.

She had noticed that her sons had stepped on the threshold of youth. Her mind was worried over the puzzling question of finding suitable brides for her sons. Riding on the viewless wings of imagination, she ranged through the harems of some Vidyadhar kings. She visualized one after another some Vidyadhar maidens. But she could not find anyone among them who could match her sons in respect of appearance, family, line, virtues and heroism.

Then, she sat up on her bed; she set right her dress. She raised the wicks in the lamps and made them burn bright. She came out of her chamber slowly, quietly and silently so that the silence of the night might not be disturbed. She passed in front of several sleeping chambers; and, at last, she stood at the door of a magnificent sleeping chamber. She made a sign to the door-keepers to move away from there. They bowed to her respectfully and moved aside. She soon entered the sleeping chamber. The interior door of the chamber had been bolted from inside.

Ratnashrava woke up from his sleep hearing the noise of someone, trying to open the door. He asked in a startled voice;

“Who is it ?”

“It is me”, said she; and approached the cot of Ratnashrava.

“You ! and at this time of the night !”

"I will tell you why I have come", said Kaikasi and sat in a stately chair. She was silent for a while; and then she spoke in a serious tone :

"My dear king ! Our sons have attained many efficacious accomplishments. Everything has ended well by the grace of Lord Shantinath".

"Yes, my dear Queen ! The astounding powers and the unexampled achievements of our sons have inspired envy even in the minds of heavenly beings".

"This is the talk of the town. In all the mansions, streets and circles of the city, our people have been talking only about our sons".

"This is the way of the world; the heroic ones are adored everywhere".

"I too see them and...."

"And your heart swells to see them, I think", Ratnashrava smiled joyfully and said completing what she was saying.

"Now, surely my dream will come true".

"Well ! What is your dream ?"

"The conquest of Lanka.... my dream is that Lanka should attain liberation".

"True dear ! Already, the minds and hearts of our enemies are agitated and confounded by the fear of the noises of war and the impending disaster of a total decimation of their race". Ratnashrava said raising his voice a little.

"Yes ! But when are we going to hear the auspicious melodies of the marriages of our sons ? When can we witness the jubilations and celebrations of the weddings of our sons ?"

"Oh ! I never thought of this !"

"It is for this reason that I have come here at this time of the night".

"Very well. What have you thought about it ?"

"My thoughts about this have no end. I have not been able to sleep on account of these thoughts".

"Have you thought of any suitable brides?"

"No. No. I have not thought of any brides. Though I thought about it long, I have not been able to find any suitable girls".

"Then?"

"Ah! This is really fine! Is it only I that should think of this matter!" Kaikasi said pretending to be angry.

"So, should I also look for suitable brides?" Ratnashrava said in a jocular tone.

"If not you who else can do this?"

Both laughed and their laughter filled the chamber.

"Dear queen! Worrying thus is of no use".

"Then, should not parents think of the affairs of their children?" Kaikasi said, feeling a little annoyed.

"Surely they should think of the affairs of their children; but within certain limits; not to the extent of becoming sleepless on account of too much worry".

"I do not really understand you. What are you saying? What exactly do you mean?"

"My dear Queen! It is natural that we should worry about our children. But in the case of souls that possess *Punya* (merit), their merit (*Punya*) itself thinks of their affairs and settles their future. When that is so what is the use of our thinking about it? Your sons are heroic; and they are blessed by fortune. Their affairs will be settled by their own *Punya* (merit) and fortune. Their *Punya* and their Destiny will think of their affairs. I am, sure that very soon their Destiny and their merit will bring the right partners".

"What you say is true but.."

"You are not able to get rid of your worry. Am I right?"

"Yes, that's right".

“Now, you give up all your worries. Everything will be all right. Lord Shantinath will always stand by us”.

Kaikasi felt convinced of the truth of what her husband had said; and returned to her chamber.

Man always keeps running after the mirage of materialistic pleasures and enjoyments; but in his mad hunt for mundane happiness he gets so deeply caught in the vicious circle of emotional and intellectual confusions that he cannot even touch the periphery of happiness. This fine Sanskrit *epigram* is cent per cent true. *Shraddhavan labhate sukham*. He who has faith attains felicity. Faith is necessary to attain felicity. A genuine faith in the doctrines based on *Punya* (merit) and *Pap* (sin) enable one to attain felicity. The soul that believes in this doctrine gives a hint to others to pursue the path of felicity. In the present age human beings are being consumed by the wild flames of sorrow, anguish, oppression and desperation. The basic reason for this is the absence of faith in the doctrines relating to *Punya* (merit) and *Pap* (sin). When a person is experiencing sorrow and anguish, he tries to throw the blame upon others; and with or without reason, he treats them with contempt. In other words, man blames others for his misfortunes and miseries; but when he is in prosperity and happiness, he claims that it is all due to his intelligence and intellectual incisiveness, and he praises himself. The consequence of this propensity is that man when he is in sorrow or misery, develops contempt, hatred and dislike for others; and similarly, when he is in happiness and prosperity, he develops false pride, arrogance, and becomes a slave to many addictions. Such a man cannot experience real happiness in both the states; on the contrary, he who believes in the doctrine that our *Punya* (merit) and *Papa* (sin) determine our happiness or sorrow, experiences real happiness.

Dashmukh Ravan's destiny knocked on the doors of the city of *Surasangit* situated on the *Vaithadhya* mountain. Mayaraj, the *Vidyadhar* king of *Surasangit* was steeped in deep worry. He was plunged in the ocean of restlessness and worry. *Hemavathi*, the queen also was plunged in deep worry. Their daughter,

Mandodari who was the very embodiment of beauty and nobility had entered the threshold of youth. Her infatuating beauty inspired envy in the beholders. The chiselled beauty of her form and the grace of her face made people wonder whether she was an angel come down to earth. Buoyant youthfulness sprang out of every organ of her body. Her youth and beauty were indeed bewitching. Her parents were naturally thinking of finding a suitable bridegroom for her.

At the proper time, Mayaraj, the king of Surasangit searched for a suitable bridegroom for his darling daughter in the prominent families of the Vidyadhars in the southern and northern kingdoms situated in the Vaithadhya. But he had not been able to find any Vidyadhar who stood the test of his expectations. So Mayaraj and Hemavathi were deeply worried.

Their worry gradually took the form of anxiety and grief. Their hopes of finding a suitable bridegroom for their daughter had met with frustration. The king used to spend most of his time alone, in his chamber, walking up and down in deep thoughtfulness. His ways caused great worry to the Chief Minister. One day, the Chief Minister sat near Mayaraj respectfully; and said, "Your Excellency ! For some days, I have been watching you with anxiety. Something has been worrying you.. You are always dull and dejected, lacking all enthusiasm and zeal. You have not been evincing any interest in the political and administrative affairs. Day by day, your face has been growing duller and duller". The Vidyadhar king heaved a long sigh; and was silent.

"Dear King ! If what has been worrying you can be revealed to me, kindly do so. Tell me why you have been worrying yourself so deeply. If I can...." The serious and elevated voice of the Chief Minister echoed in the chamber with a metallic clangour.

"My dear Chief Minister ! What is there that I should conceal from you ? Our princess Mandodari has stepped on the threshold of youth. She has reached the age of marriage. Her buoyant youth has been blooming like flowers in spring. I

searched for a suitable bridegroom; and drew a blank everywhere. I have not been able to find any young man worthy of her hand in marriage, in the Vidyadhar families, in Vaithadhya. This worry has been eating into my heart. This is the thorn that has been piercing my heart”.

On hearing the words of King Mayaraj, the Chief Minister was silent for a few moments. Then he said, “Dear king! you might not have found a suitable bridegroom for our princess, Mandodari in the Vaithadhya mountain, among the Vidyadhar families; but the womb of the world is not barren. It has been well said, “*Bahuratna Vasundhara*”; the earth hath many gems in her womb.”

“Is there any worthy young man in your view?” The king said to his Chief Minister looking towards him, eager to see if he knew any young man worthy of Mandodari’s hand, in marriage.

“Yes. My dear King! Surely, I have a worthy young man in my view”.

“Who is he?”

“Who else can it be? The son of Ratnashrava; and the grand-son of Sumali”.

“Very good!”

“Dear King! Only recently, Prince Dashmukh Ravan achieved mastery over a thousand accomplishments and arts and secured miraculous weapons. He also secured the divine sword, “*Chandrasah*”. Countless Vidyadhars, gods and goddesses are full of admiration for him and are ready to do anything for him. Where can we find a worthier bridegroom than Ravan for our beautiful Princess? Can we find such a youngster of rare abilities and accomplishments and of such excellent physical appearance anywhere in the three worlds? He has a fascinating physical appearance; he is heroic and has attained mastery over supernatural arts and accomplishments. I think he is, in all respects, worthy of Princess Mandodari’s hand in marriage”.

On hearing the words of his Chief Minister, King Mayaraj became cheerful and jubilant and heaved a sigh of joy and relief; and his face bloomed like a fresh flower.

"My dear Chief Minister ! In that case, why delay ? Please make preparations to set off to the city of Swayamprabha. Meanwhile, I will consult our queen about this matter".

After the Chief Minister left the chamber, King Mayaraj set off briskly towards the harem.

Noticing the king coming into her chamber, like a speedy river, the queen Hemavathi, stood up and ran forward to receive him.

"My lord ! What is the matter ? Why are you in such impatience ?" The queen asked the king, tossing between the waves of elation and depression.

"My dear Queen ! We have found a worthy bridegroom for Mandodari."

"Who is he ? Let me also know who he is ?"

"He is Dashmukh Ravan, the grand-son of the revered Sumali. He has mastered countless accomplishments and arts; and has secured the divine sword, *Chandrahast* which even gods cannot attain. He is indeed a radiant light whose effulgent halo will brighten the fame of the Vidyadhar world".

"We are indeed fortunate ! We are indeed blessed in finding such a young man ! All this is the result of the grace of Lord Shantinath". Hemavathi said overwhelmed with joyful emotions.

"Then you make preparations for your journey to the city of Swayamprabha. I will send our Chief Minister before-hand to the city of Swayamprabha so that he may have a preliminary discussion with Sumali and Ratnashrava about the matter. Ah ! Yes. Where is Mandodari ? She is not to be seen anywhere", the king said looking around.

Mandodari was standing behind a door and was overhearing the conversation going on between her father and mother,

with deep concentration. On hearing the name of the great hero Dashmukh Ravan, she began to dream of a sweet and happy life with him. But when she found that her father was looking for her, she came out of her hiding place; and approached her father as if she knew nothing.

"Come on dear ! Do you know how long your mother has been looking for you ?"

"Then, leaving the mother and daughter together in that chamber, he quietly returned to his chamber.

Queen Hemavathi took Mandodari into her lap with overflowing joy and affection; and said, "Dear daughter ! now, we have to get ready".

"Mother ! What for ?" She asked her mother as if she knew nothing about it.

"To go to your father-in-law's house !"

Mandodari's face reddened with shyness. She blushed to the brims of her being. She kept silently scratching the floor with her feet.

"Dear daughter ! How will it be if we celebrate your marriage with Dashmukh Ravan, the grand-son of Sumali ? Do you like it ?" Hemavathi kept looking at her daughter, to know her mind, regarding the alliance.

"Mother dear ! Why should you ask me about it ? Whatever you do, you do only for my happiness; don't you ?"

In accordance with the king's wish, the Chief Minister set off to Swayamprabha, on an auspicious day, accompanied by some chief courtiers and dignitaries. How long would Vidya-dhars who can fly through the sky, take to reach that city ? They were soon at Swayamprabha. The door-keepers, at once, approached Sumali and informed him of the arrival of the guests from the city of Surasangit.

At once, Sumali came out; received the guests with open arms; took them into his court; and showed them to proper seats. When they were all seated, he asked them :

"Dear sirs ! You are most welcome. How was your journey? Had you a happy journey? I hope that our beloved friend Mayaraj is hale and hearty. I hope all our people there are well !"

"Oh thou radiant Crest-jewel of the Rakshasa dynasty ! King Mayaraj wishes to know your welfare and prosperity; and to convey his heartfelt wishes for your welfare. He has sent us now on a special purpose !" The Chief Minister complimented Sumali; and said in a polite manner :

"Kindly tell us the purpose on which Mayaraj has sent you to us. We will do all that is in our power to help him achieve success".

"Oh lord ! Our king has a daughter by name Mandodari who is the very embodiment of absolute beauty and noble virtues. Our king desires to give her in marriage to your famous grand-son, Dashmukh Ravan who is reputed to be a young man of extraordinary heroism and accomplishments".

When Sumali heard the message thus conveyed by the Chief Minister, his joy knew no bounds. He swayed in inexpressible delight and elation. At once, he sent for Ratnashrava and discussed the matter with him. After having consulted the ministers, courtiers and the members of the Royal family, Sumali announced his consent to establish this alliance with King Mayaraj.

Sumali was supremely happy because he had found a worthy bride for his grand-son, Dashmukh Ravan; and because he would have a friendly kingdom in Vaithadhya mountain which was impregnable and which was the strong-hold of the enemies of the Rakshasa dynasty. In Sumali's view, this was like "hitting two birds at one shot". This alliance would be favourable to the future plans of the Rakshasa dynasty. Sumali who was far-sighted deemed this alliance favourable both socially and politically. Kaikasi also gave her hearty consent to the alliance.

King Mayaraj's ministers and courtiers joyfully returned home; and conveyed the happy news to him. Later, the elders

met and fixed an auspicious day for the marriage according to the advice of the court-astrologers.

Both the parties began to make grand preparations for the marriage. Preparations for the marriage were in full swing in both the kingdoms.

King Mayaraj arrived at a magnificent garden outside the city of Swayamprabha with the members of his family, his beautiful daughter, Mandodari, his courtiers, relatives and others, on the prescribed day. The garden and the city had been splendidly decorated to add colour to the occasion. A special palace had been constructed in the garden for the stay of the guests. The greatest sculptors, artists and architects of Swayamprabha had designed and constructed the mansion besides renovating and decorating the city of Swayamprabha. The city put on the appearance of a newly built city. Its topless towers and decorated mansions and roads gave the look of a heavenly city.

What defect can be there in a place where thousands of Muses presiding over the various branches of learning and where countless heavenly beings stand ready, with folded hands to carry out any task ?

The marriage of Dashmukh Ravan and Mandodari took place in the presence of the Kings of various countries, in the midst of joyous jubilations and celebrations; and in the midst of auspicious melodies emanating from musical instruments and the auspicious *Mantras* recited by the priests, that reverberated in the sky.

VI

THE COMMENCEMENT OF THE TRIUMPHAL MARCHES

Dashmukh Ravan spent time enjoying physical and sensual pleasures in the company of his beautiful wife, Mandodari. Time seemed to be flying on the wings of air. Seasons came and passed. Prosperity and felicity flowed like rivers in the city of Swayamprabha. The king and the people were floating on sky-high waves of overflowing joy. Grand-father, Sumali and father, Ratnashrava were supremely happy over Dashmukh Ravan's marriage. They were absolutely satisfied with the alliance. Kaikasi repeatedly thanked her stars for the good fortune that they had bestowed upon her son.

Sometimes, Dashmukh Ravan used to fly through the sky with Mandodari; and would disappear mysteriously among the heaven-kissing peaks of the Vaithadhya mountain and some times, he would remain for a long time, in some fascinating place on the earth spending time joyously with Mandodari, absorbed in amorous sports and delights. Sometimes, they sat on sky-high peaks and contemplated on the magnificent sights around with joy overflowing; and sometimes they sat on the banks of beautiful lakes and heard with delight the melodious murmur of the melting waves. Sometimes, they tasted the sweetness of the nectar of love skimming through green and luxuriant grass, in some beautiful valley, full of green trees, and blooming flowers. Sometimes, they enjoyed heavenly delights in the bushes and brakes of beautiful gardens. Sometimes as she kept watching him, he would run into unknown and perilous places and perform some heroic feat that filled her

with admiration for him. So sweet, in its soft golden smiles, fascinating as a fervent dream, faded the day as they were lost in their amorous sports. In the mornings, they walked along grassy plains arm in arm forgetting everything. Her eyes were deeper than the depth of waters stilled when no winds blow; but suddenly there would appear waves of joy and throw her into states of sheer passion and ecstasy. He tasted honey in her words and saw moonshine in her smiles.

In this manner, the river of hours and days passed into the endless and boundless ocean of time.

One day, Dashmukh Ravan happened to travel through the sky alone; he went flying higher and higher; he went beyond the boundaries of the earth, into some unknown areas in space. He was at such a great height that wherever he cast his eyes, he saw clouds, clouds and nothing but clouds. Dashmukh was above the clouds. It was as if the clouds had assumed the form of a garland of victory and had decked his neck; and as if they were clinging around his mighty head. All of a sudden, his eyes fell on the sky-high peaks of the mountain of Meghrava. The snow-covered mountains filled him with a boundless delight and peace. Very soon, he descended on the Meghrava mountain. As he kept watching with fascination, the various colourful and beautiful aspects of nature, his eyes, by chance, fell upon a spot there. He was thrilled to the brims of his being when he saw that infatuating sight.

Thousands of beautiful Vidyadhar damsels were freely bathing in a lake of pellucid water on the northern side.

Dashmukh Ravan made a decision in his mind and proceeded towards that land of the love-god, *Manmatha*. A little away from the lake there was a massive banyan tree. He stood among the bushes beneath the tree and from that place of hiding he kept watching the infatuating beauty of the damsels, with an inebriating fascination. When they sensed the presence of a stranger there, their eye-brows contracted with anxiety. But when they saw a young man who possessed a fascinating appearance and who possessed greater grace and

beauty of form than *Kamadeva*, the god of love, they felt greatly fascinated by him. Their eyes met the eyes of Ravan; and the damsels became infatuated with him. On account of his unexampled beauty of form and on account of his extraordinary grace and handsomeness, Dashmukh Ravan easily became the sole lord of their dream-land. Hence, they all became eager to win his favour.

Padmavathi, Ashoklata and Vidhyutprabha were like the diadems in the crown of the bevy of those beautiful Vidyadhar damsels. Coming out of the water, putting on their dress, those damsels who had been ensnared by *Ananga*, the god of love stood in a line. They desired to converse with him. But their lips quivered with their overpowering passions and emotion. Words got choked in their throat. All of them stood with heads bowed in shyness, scratching the earth with their toes.

The effect of passion and emotion is such that it takes away the power of speech.

Summoning up some strength and courage, Padmavathi said, "My dear lord! At your very sight, we have lost our mental peace. Really, you must be a great magician to ensnare our hearts thus :

"Dearest one ! I too am in a critical condition".

For a few moments, there was silence everywhere.

They were wondering what should be said; and what should not be said. They were both unable to say anything. Nothing occurred to them to say out. The stillness of the silence was becoming a burden to them.

Just then, Ashoklata who was talkative said, "Then, you kindly accept us and give us a place at your feet"

Dashmukh Ravan also desired this. He married the four thousand Vidyadhar damsels, according to the *Gandharva* system of marriage. Soon, by virtue of his supernatural power, he created a vast and attractive airship. He sat in the airship

with his four thousand newly wedded wives. When he was about to fly away in the airship, there arose a sudden commotion in the world of the Vidyadhars.

The Vidyadhar whose duty it was to safeguard the Vidyadhar damsels flew through the sky, at once, and approached Amarsundar, the Vidyadhar emperor. He informed the emperor, with a broken voice the enormity that had been committed by Dashmukh Ravan. On hearing it, Amarsundar was taken aback.

"Thou greatest of Vidyadhars ! Some young Vidhyadhar after marrying our Vidyadhar girls is flying away abducting them. Look there ! They are flying at a great speed".

On hearing this, Amarsundar stood up hissing like a king cobra that had been trodden on the tail. At once, Amarsundar went to capture and crush down Dashmukh Ravan. The other Vidhyadhar kings and their friends with their armies set off behind Amarsundar. The whole sky became filled with the Vidyadhar armies which flew like vast clouds of locusts.

Seeing Amarsundar following them at a great speed; the damsels became restless and worried; and said : "Dear Lord ! Hurry on, Drive faster; or else....."

Ravan whose supernatural airship was piercing through the sky, glanced at them cursorily; and said, "Why are you worried? Am I not with you? When I am here who has the guts to do any harm to you ?"

"Dear lord ! You do not know the powers of Amarsundar, the Vidyadhar emperor. That is why you speak thus". The Vidyadhar girls said with a voice shaken by fear. Their faces had grown pale with fear and agitation.

"Oh ! He is a veritable Yama, the god of Death". Someone's voice rose and disappeared like waves through the air.

"Amarsundar can harass and vanquish the greatest warriors, alone and single-handed", someone else said.

“Dear sister ! Look there ! He is not alone. He is accompanied by King Kanakbudh who is a warrior of tremendous valour. It will not take even a moment for them to destroy our dear lord and to decimate us”.

Fearfulness and cowardice are natural in women. Generally, when women are confronted with dangers and calamities, they become terrified. Only one or two out of thousands may have courage to face calamities with equanimity. Seeing his newly wedded wives torn by fear and agitation. Dashmukh Ravan smiled and said, “Oh you dear ones ! What is the use of screaming thus ? You will see whether Amarsundar is a *Yama* or your beloved lord is a *Yama*. Let them approach us a little”.

Weak-hearted women cannot realize any truth except through experience. That was the case here also. Those Vidyadhar damsels who had been brought up with overflowing affection, in the lap of luxury; who had slept only on flowery beds did not know that their husband, their beloved lord was not an ordinary man; but that he was a supreme master of the arts of war; and that he had achieved mastery over extraordinary accomplishments. How could they know that their dear lord was the son of a Vidyadhar ?

Within the twinkling of an eye, the whole sky became enveloped with the vast armies of the Vidyadhars. Irritated and incensed, the Vidyadhar heroes surrounded Dashmukh Ravan on all sides; and began to rain arrows and other weapons upon him determined to send him to the kingdom of *Yama*.

But Dashmukh was not inferior to anyone. He was a hero... a militaric hero of exceptional abilities and attainments. Revealing his exceptional powers, he wheeled a disc in such a manner that there appeared not two or four but countless airships resembling his airship and the Vidyadhar armies were utterly confounded; and flabbergasted. A terrible war began between them. Before Dashmukh Ravan, the Vidyadhars felt like dwarfs. When the enemies released their weapons and devices, Dashmukh Ravan released counter-weapons; stopped them on the

way and knocked the smoke out of their heads. When Ravan was fighting alone in the midst of a vast army of enemies, his newly married wives were experiencing great agitation and worry. Their agitation reached the highest point of intensity. But for Ravan it was not a war but a game..... an entertainment. He wanted, to give it an extensive form; in other words, he desired to prolong the war to tease, taunt and torture his enemies. But visualizing the mental state of his newly-wedded wives, he decided to end the war. As a consequence of this decision, he stopped using ordinary weapons and began using efficacious magical and supernatural devices.

At once, he released the *Prasvapana astra* (a device) which went ferociously hissing and swishing towards Amarsundar and the other Vidyadhars striking mortal dread in their hearts. On account of the swishing sound of the *Prasvapana astra*, the entire atmosphere became pervaded with dread. As Ravan kept advancing against them, the eyes of the Vidyadhars grew heavy and drowsy. Their hands and legs were rendered absolutely powerless. They lost control over them; and the weapons in their hands fell down. The faces of the warriors of the enemy-army grew pale with a mortal dread. It was as if chaos, which by heavenly doom, had lain in endless gloom, woke up and covered them all with its mighty wings; and cried "havoc".

Padmavathi and the other Vidyadhar damsels were astounded and thrilled by Ravan's supernatural heroism. They realized that they had married a man of extraordinary valour and heroism; and their hearts overflowed with a feeling of joy.

Again Dashmukh Ravan placing two steps ahead released another tremendously efficacious device. The result was there appeared everywhere countless terrible cobras hissing with their hoods held up. Black snakes, pale snakes, and spotted snakes rose in millions everywhere. In a moment, there appeared countless snakes.... big ones, long ones, large ones, and all went hissing and clung to the bodies of his enemies. Thus, within a moment, Dashmukh Ravan bound all his enemies with the *Nagastra* (the snake-device). Just as cattle are bound and drawn, he bound the Vidyadhars and kept dragging them to inflict

upon them the final justice. Just at that moment, the Vidyadhar damsels approached him and said in a humble voice :

“Oh, lord of our lives ! Among these Vidyadhars there are our grand-fathers, fathers and brothers. Oh you ocean of grace ! Release them from this bondage. That will cheer us”.

Dashmukh Ravan was not only heroic but also magnanimous. He felt that he had inflicted enough punishment on the offenders. He had also had an opportunity of displaying his valour and abilities before his wives. So, he decided to comply with the request of his dear wives; and released Amarsundar and the other Vidyadhars from that dreadful bondage. The Vidyadhar armies bent their heads in shame. Their faces showed their agitation and helplessness. They stood with bent heads and folded hands before Dashmukh Ravan.

“Oh you greatest of men. Kindly pardon us ! We did not know who you were. We did not know that you were a man of such heroism. Instead of honouring you and receiving you as our son-in-law, we fought a war against you. This was absolutely improper, on our part. Now, please do not inflict further disgrace upon us. We heartily regret our action of attacking you”, said Amarsundar, the Vidyadhar emperor.

“O King ! Only he who is omniscient and who knows the past, present and the future can see what is proper and what is improper. What you did was absolutely right. When some unknown person is abducting your daughters if mighty warriors like you keep quiet, not taking steps to safeguard your daughters that would be highly improper”, Dashmukh Ravan said weighing the scales of justice impartially. On hearing this, the Vidyadhars felt greatly happy.

“But mighty sir ! Even now we do not know who you are and we do not know even your name”.

“Oh ! I am really sorry. I forgot to introduce myself to you. I am the son of Kaikasi, the daughter of Vyomabindu, the Vidyadhar emperor. Sumali, the king of Rakshasas is my grandfather and Ratnashrava is my father”.

"Oh ! Then, you are Dashmukh !" All exclaimed simultaneously.

In reply to this, there appeared a bright smile on his radiant face. He smiled to suggest that he was Dashmukh. All the Vidyadhars living in the Vaithadhya had known that at one attempt, Dashmukh had attained thousands of powers and accomplishments.

The Vidyadhars who were greatly delighted to hear this, again and again congratulated Dashmukh Ravan. The four thousand Vidyadhar damsels felt blessed for having secured Dashmukh Ravan for their husband.

After the Vidyadhars took leave of Dashmukh Ravan and returned home, Dashmukh Ravan drove the airship towards Swayamprabhanagar; and made it fly through space. The sun-god deeply delighted by his extraordinary heroism, began declining in the west, out of deference for him.

This was the beginning of Dashmukh Ravan's heroic feats and triumphant military exploits.

Who knows the ways of Destiny ?

His heroic exploits had begun with the event of abducting women !

And even the end of his heroic exploits was with the abduction of a woman !

The air-ship landed in the beautiful garden outside the city of Swayamprabha, in the morning. Dashmukh Ravan entered the city with his four thousand wives. The citizens received the heroic prince with excessive honour.

Dashmukh Ravan straight went to meet his mother, Kaikasi. Having approached her, he prostrated to her with overflowing humbleness. The Vidyadhar damsels also did the same. Kaikasi overwhelmed with affection bestowed upon them her choicest benedictions. She saw Dashmukh Ravan and his new wives with a little surprise and joy. Dashmukh Ravan suggested, by means of a sign, to his wives to stay there with his mother; and went to meet Mandodari.

Poor Mandodari ! Looking for her husband's return, she lay on her bed face downward, having become mentally upset and worried by her husband's absence. She had no peace of mind; and she was feeling intensely restless and deeply distressed. It was as if she was half-dead on account of the separation from her husband. Sometimes, she got up; slowly went up to the window and looked sadly into the sky as far as her eyes could see, in the hope of seeing her husband returning. Not seeing any sign of him, she would heave a long and bitter sigh and would return to her bed, in deep worry and restlessness.

Dashmukh entered her chamber, with silent steps; but the silence was disturbed. As soon as she heard the soft noise of steps, she was startled; and sat up on the bed. Noticing her husband standing nearby, she hurriedly got off her cot; moved to his side and stood by him with her head bent down, displeased at his delay in returning to her. All of a sudden, he burst into laughter; and moving forwards, he sat on the cot. Mandodari sat at his feet silently.

"My dearest ! To-day, I am placing on your shoulders a heavy duty and responsibility".

"Every day you bring me some task or the other. Is there any day on which I have not had to do some duty or the other for you ?"

"But the duty that I am going to place on your shoulders to-day will annoy and irritate you".

"Otherwise how can food be digested".

"Do you know anything ?"

"If I had the power of knowing everything without your telling me about it, would I have remained here thus ?"

Suddenly, they heard the voice of Kaikasi outside,

"Come on ! See with your eyes. Then you will know at once." While saying this, Dashmukh stood up.

"Mother dear ! I am here".

"Come on. Take over these six thousand sisters of yours. Take care of them. This is your duty."

"Sisters! My sisters! Mother! What do you mean?" Mandodari said biting her lips and looking doubtfully at Dashmukh Ravan.

"Yes. Yes, your sisters; and my daughters-in-law", Kaikasi said with overflowing affection moving towards Mandodari. Just then, one by one, the Vidyadhar girls came in; saluted the feet of Kaikasi and Mandodari and stood behind them humbly.

Soon, Mandodari came to know of her husband's heroic exploit and amorous adventure. Her magnanimous heart was thrilled and overwhelmed with joy when she heard about her husband's heroic exploit. A noble wife experiences delight when she finds that her husband has attained prosperity and happiness.

Mandodari floated on the waves of joy when she saw the newly wedded wives of her husband. Dashmukh Ravan recited the *Mantra* of *Bahurupini* (assuming many forms); and he assumed many forms. As a result of this, everyone of the six thousand Vidyadhar maidens enjoyed the company of Dashmukh Ravan.

The wheel of time kept moving.

The Vidyadhar, Mahodar who ruled over Kumbhapur, on the Vaithadhya mountain, had a daughter by name Tadinmala. Mahodar desired to give her in marriage to Kumbhakarna. In consequence, the marriage of Kumbhakarna took place with her, at a proper time. Vibhishan's marriage took place with a beautiful princess by name Pankajashri, the daughter of Vira, the ruler of Jyothishpur.

Thus the pilgrimage of the life of the three brothers began.

From times immemorial, this has been the course pursued by human beings generally. Birth, existence and death! Being born; growing up; marrying; enjoying worldly pleasures; and

then one day disappearing into the dark realm of death. Even in the past, people enjoyed countless sensual delights; but where is any end to sensual and physical desires? If we put fuel into the fires, flames arise. This truth should be realized; and should be firmly borne in mind. Only then can there be any end to the wheel of life.

Kaikasi was supremely delighted by a contemplation of the new world of joy and jubilations created by her sons. Yet in the depths of her heart, there was some throbbing pain; some flames of sorrow rising and consuming her. But, of course, she did not want to interfere with the happiness of her sons even to the least extent. She did not speak to her sons about the ever-consuming flames of sorrow that had been arising in her heart. Dashmukh Ravan never stayed in the city of Swayamprabha. He used to spend most of his time flying through the skies enjoying the infatuating company of his wives whose beauty was unexampled. He was spending time plunging deep into sensual pleasures oblivious of everything else. He forgot himself in his inebriating sports with his dear wives.

Some time passed thus !

Kaikasi sent a message to Kumbhakarna and Vibhishan, asking them to meet her.

The two brothers came and stood near their mother.

After a long time, they noticed again that their mother's face was torn with worry and agitation. A tremor ran through their veins. They kept watching their mother with fixed eyes; and stood silent. They were eager to know what their mother would say. They stood wondering what she might say and trying to probe the depths of her heart.

VII

THE CONQUEST OF LANKA

"My dear children ! When can my long-cherished aspiration be fulfilled ?" Kaikasi said in a voice shaken by pain and agitation, looking intently at her sons.

"What is your long-cherished aspiration, dear mother ?" Vibhishan said, to know her mind.

"Dear son ! My aspiration is that you should recapture your ancestral kingdom; that you should conquer Lanka; and establish there a free Kingdom."

"Oh ! The conquest of Lanka ! Is that all ? That will be just a game for us. Kindly tell us if you have any other aspiration".

Vibhishan glanced towards Kumbhakarna. Kumbhakarna stood serenely watching the face of his mother which had been darkened by worry; trying to probe her thoughts and feelings in the dim twilight.

Bells were being rung in the high temples in the city of Swayamprabha. The time of Arti was over. Here and there, lights had begun to glow.

After having received Kaikasi's commands, the two brothers stood up. As soon as Kaikasi entered her sleeping chamber in a mood of deep depression, she received the news that a son was born to Mandodari. She was overwhelmed with joy on hearing this news; and gave away as a gift a gold necklace to

the attendant who had brought the happy news; and she also announced that celebrations should be carried out in the temple of Lord Shantinath glorifying him. She also gave orders that gifts should be given to the poor and the destitute; and to those who were crippled or disabled. She also, ordered that officers should go through the city riding on elephants and distribute sweets to the people of the city. Her joy knew no bounds.

Kumbhakarna, who was a veritable *Kalabhairav*; and Vibhishan who was a man of great wisdom and discernment began planning the conquest of Lanka in order to fulfil their mother's long-cherished aspiration.

"Vibhishan ! Why should we not go straight and break the bones of Vaishnavan and give him a good licking ? We shall go and rout him and make him lick the dust," Kumbhakarna said in intense emotional excitement; stamping the ground with his feet.

"Dear brother ! This is not a difficult thing for us. I am thinking of something else", said Vibhishan.

"What are you thinking of ? Let me also know it".

"First, we should create havoc, harassing him and confounding him. We should first worry and agitate him by our violent dance of destruction; and see how he reacts to it".

Pausing a little, Vibhishan said this, explaining his plan.

"Ready ! I am ready ! Let us set off at once", said Kumbhakarna, taking up his mace and issuing a war-cry.

Both were valiant.

Both were great warriors with extraordinary abilities and attainments.

Both were overflowing with irrepressible enthusiasm and courage.

Both were warriors of such heroism that the darkness of a dreadful night could not daunt them; that the ferocious roars

of wild animals could not frighten them and that the clangour of the weapons of the enemies could not shake their fearless self-confidence. They were veritable war-gods;

Kumbhakarna seized his menacing mace. Vibhishan took up his mighty bow and arrows.

And within a moment, they set off towards Lanka, flying through the sky. The Kingdom of Lanka was not distant to them because they could fly through space with the speed of wind.

Very soon, they entered the city of Lanka which looked splendid like Alakapuri, the heavenly city rendered resplendent by countless lights. Both the brothers were astounded by the supernatural beauty of their ancestral city.

The magnificent city of Lanka was surrounded by a mighty fort called Suvarnadurg. It was built of massive stones and the fort symbolized the strength and prosperity of the city. The faithful followers of the Vidyadhar Vaishnavan stood guard at every door, gate, turret and tower of the fort keeping a vigilant watch. Countless sentinels stood guard at all points.

“Vibhishan !”

“What’s the matter ?”

“Do you see our Lanka ? How beautiful it is ! How unexampled is its magnificence ? And Vaishnavan is plundering its prosperity and joy”.

“Do not lose your patience. His time has approached”.

“Really ?”

“Proceed. Let us carry out our plan and create havoc in the city”.

“But how ?”

“Look there. That is the gate of Lanka. Do you see it ?”

“Yes”.

"First let us go there; and then we shall think of the next step".

The two brothers approached the gate of Lanka with silent steps. The gate-keepers happened to be in deep sleep. Their snores were disturbing the silence and desolation of the night. All of a sudden, an extraordinary idea occurred to Vibhishan. Very carefully, he tied together the long moustaches of the two gate-keepers and slipped away from there. Then, he gave some signal to Kumbhakarna through his eyes. The next moment, Kumbhakarna rose to the skies and disappeared. Vibhishan also climbed a huge banyan tree that stood nearby and sat there watching the game.

And after a short while, there appeared a large and massive rock floating in the sky. It was seen moving slowly towards Lanka. Before the truth of the situation came to be known to the people of Lanka, outside the fort, there was heard a loud and deafening bang as if the whole universe had exploded. As soon as the loud bang was heard, the whole earth began to shake and quake. Every sentinel and guard began to shake and shudder with a mortal dread. They could not know what was happening. They were all in a fix. In that very time of indecisiveness, every warrior took up his weapons and rushed in the direction from which he had heard the noise. The gate-keepers woke up with deafening cries of terror. But somehow they managed to stand up together screaming since their moustaches had been tied together. They stood up clashing against each other's face.

Meanwhile, the arrogant and horrifying shouts of Kumbhakarna were heard in the sky. Vaishnavan's warriors who were shocked by these noises began looking in all directions. Within a few moments, a large number of warriors gathered at the main gate of the fort. The plan of Vibhishan and Kumbhakarna was thus successful. They desired only this. Vibhishan descended from the tree and began to rain sharp and pointed arrows at them. The warriors proceeded towards Vibhishan and released counter arrows and weapons against him. Seeing that Vibhishan

was surrounded by enemies, Kumbhakarna pounced upon them and began to attack them with his dreadful mace. The warriors began to lick the dust. They were incapable of facing Vibhishan and Kumbhakarna who were dealing deadly blows to them.

Vaishnavan was nonplussed when he came to know of all this. His anger shot up to the brims of his being. At once, he gave orders to Virendra, the commander of his forces, "Go at once and bring those wicked fellows dead or alive to my presence. Do not delay even for a moment. Also find out who they are and whence they have come". When Virendra, the Commander, came there with picked troops, Vibhishan gave a sign to Kumbhakarna and, at once, both began pursuing the path to Patal Lanka. They were chased by Vaishnavan's warriors. Both of them had mastered the art of flying through the sky; and those warriors of Vaishnavan were, after all, human beings. How could there be a match between the two parties? The result was that in a few moments, the two brothers disappeared; and those soldiers stood wringing their hands. But Virendra, the Commander found that the two heroes were grand-sons of Sumali, the King of the Rakshasas; but the problem was he could not find out which two of them were they; whether they were Dashmukh and Vibhishan; or Kumbhakarna and Dashmukh or Vibhishan and Kumbhakarna.

The Commander returned to Lanka and narrated to Vaishnavan, the king, all that had taken place.

Meanwhile, the two brothers returned to Swayamprabhanagar; went straight to their chambers; and slept soundly.

Their hearts leapt in joy when they thought of what had taken place on that day. The lions had tasted blood. It had tasted strange and fascinating. Therefore, again and again, there arose, in their minds, similar plans to harass and confound the king of Lanka.

A man's nature, temperament, and mental state are estimated on the basis of the kind of thoughts, plans and aspirations that arise in his mind.

In the morning, the two brothers entered the harem to meet their mother, Kaikasi. They offered their compliments to their mother and received her blessings. They narrated to her in an interesting manner the way in which they had harassed Vaishravan, the King of Lanka on the previous night. On hearing it, Kaikasi, could not control her laughter. After hearing the whole story, she burst into loud laughter.

“Mother dear ! This is nothing compared to what we can do. You please keep watching. We will harass and confound Vaishravan in such way that he will remember us throughout his life”, said Kumbhakarna in a loud voice.

After having carried out the mornings’ ablutions and other duties, Vibhishan and Kumbhakarna set off to Lanka again. Since they could travel through the sky, it did not take much time for them to reach Lanka. Within a short while the city of Lanka came into their view. Vaishravan, the Vidyadhar had made strong arrangements for the security of the city. But Vibhishan and Kumbhakarna were not the kind of heroes that would enter the city through the gates. They flew over the city of Lanka and descended upon a beautiful and convenient plain, in the midst of the city.

“Vibhishan ! Why should we not meet our brother ?”

“Whom ? You mean Vaishravan ?”

“Yes !”

“What are we to do there ?”

“We shall carry away the women in his harem !”

“No, No, what are you saying ?”

“Why ?”

“If we abduct women we will be staining the honour and noble name of our family. We should not at all do such an unwise and thoughtless thing. Such evil thoughts only tantamount to an invitation to death and total ruin.”

"Then brother, you tell me what we should do".

"Come on. We shall sit in the deep shadow of that Ashoka tree and think about it". The two brothers went; and sat in the shadow of the Ashoka tree which stood nearby. Vibhishan explained, in detail, his plans to Kumbhakarna; and also pointed out what they should do at present.

The sun-god of the thousand radiant rays, sat on his resplendent throne in the centre of the sky. Both of them flew up into the air; and within a fraction of a second, they reached the tops of the sky-high towers of the city, where they had placed the battle-drums and trumpets in a safe place. Four sentinels who were as ferocious as lions stood guard there, with the utmost vigilance. Kumbhakarna roaring like a lion, slew and threw down one of them with one stroke of his mighty mace. The other three tried to face him. But how could they stand against the mighty sons of Kaikasi? Within a few moments, they were also slain.

What else was there to be done? Then Kumbhakarna beat on the drums with all his might. Vibhishan blew on the trumpets. On hearing the noises of the trumpets and battle-drums, all the valiant warriors, potentates and soldiers gathered in the courtyard of the palace. Virendra, the Commander wondering what he should do, at once, rushed to King Vaishnavan.

"What is this sudden call for war? Who has made it?" He asked the King with his eyes widened with wonder.

"I too have been wondering why you allowed the trumpets to be blown without giving me prior intimation." King Vaishnavan expressed his shock. "It is likely that this is some conspiracy of the sons of Kaikasi. We must make a thorough search and find out the truth".

Virendra, the Commander, at once, rushed to the spot, where the trumpets had been kept. Fire flamed out through his ferocious eyes. His body was shaking with anger. He shouted to his soldiers with an enraged voice "Go, at once! Wherever those

wicked fellows may be, bind them and bring them to me. At least, find out the cause for this nuisance”.

Soon after hearing the orders of the Commander, the soldiers climbed upto the top of the towers on which the trumpets had been placed. When they saw the gruesome sight of the four sentinels lying dead in a pool of blood, their eyes were dazzled with a shock. They noticed Vibhishan and Kumbhakarna standing there with their weapons ready for a fight.

“Who are you ?” they opened their mouths to say this; but even before they could say it out, their mouths were locked by sharp arrows shot by Vibhishan. As a consequence, all of them dropped down to the ground like dry leaves. That was the bitter punishment they suffered.

“Some wicked fellows are hiding themselves at the top of the towers”, shouted Virendra vomiting fire.

“Oh you wicked fellow ! We are not hiding ourselves. We are facing you”, shouted Vibhishan; and shot some arrows and cut off the heads of some warriors.

Within moments, a terrible war broke out. Attacking each other, both the parties moved looking before and after for safety; and the two brothers slipped away; and went out of the city of Lanka. Then, displaying their miraculous powers, they proceeded towards Pathal Lanka. When they found that they had drawn the Vidyadhars a long distance away from the city, the two brothers disappeared miraculously while the Vidyadhar warriors stood wringing their hands helplessly. The soldiers being thus frustrated had to return to Lanka empty-handed i.e., without taking the two brothers with them. Vaishnavan's anger flamed furiously to the horizons. “But, what is the use of regretting when the birds have eaten away the grain in the field ?” This proverb became true in this case. It was no use crying over spilt milk. The birds had flown away from the cage.

Kumbhakarna, who possessed a huge body; and Vibhishan, who was radiant continued to create havoc thus fearlessly and this became a habit with them. Every day, they arose before

dawn; and as soon as the sun appeared in the east, in his journey over the earth, they left Pathal Lanka, flew to Lanka and created havoc there; and then safely returned home. This became a routine with them. This activity of attacking Lanka continued for some time. King Vaishnavan and his warriors became agitated over these continual attacks on Lanka. Perturbed thus, once, Vaishnavan sent a messenger to the City of Swayamprabha.

The messenger went straight to the court at Pathal Lanka and stood before Sumali. Grand-father, Sumali gave him a proper seat; and asked him.

“May I know the purpose of your visit?”

“Oh thou king of the Rakshasas ! I have brought a message from Vaishnavan, the King of Lanka.”

“What is the message. Let me know it”.

“Oh King ! The king of Lanka has sent a message to you requesting you to restrain the movements of your undisciplined grand-sons. Please advise them not to lose their self-control. They do not know their real abilities and are ignorant like a frog in the well. They do not know the power of the King of Lanka. Even pride and arrogance have a limit. Your grand-sons have been creating havoc in Lanka, in a fraudulent manner. Until to-day, we have been treating them as suckling infants and have not harmed them. But if even after this, they continue to roar about like bulls and to behave irresponsibly, we shall not hesitate even a little to make them lick the dust like your elder brother, Mali. Please bear this in mind.”

On hearing this irrelevant and irresponsible prattle of the messenger, Dashmukh was furious; and his fury shot up. He flared up with impetuous anger. At once, he roared angrily and said:

“Who is this stupid fellow, whom you call Vaishnavan ? Probably, he is not aware of the abilities and prowess of Dashmukh Ravan. That Vaishnavan is a wicked scoundrel who has grabbed another’s Kingdom and has been exercising an un-

authorised and unjust power over Lanka. He is a heartless, cruel, shameless rogue ! He is the worst of villains ! It is not proper to attack a messenger; hence, you will return from here untouched. But if I do not cut Vaishnavan to pieces and throw them to the kites, my name is not Dashmukh Ravan." His thundering voice seemed to crack the skies. Dazed by his voice, the whole universe seemed to have come to a stand-still for a moment.

The messenger returned to Lanka and gave an insinuating account of what had happened at Pathal Lanka. Vaishnavan began to make frenzied preparations to meet the threat of an invasion.

As soon as the messenger went away from Pathal Lanka. Dashmukh Ravan ordered his men to blow on the trumpets and to beat the battle drums. The bugles sounded. The Rakshasa army began to march towards Lanka, stepping to the sounds of the war-drums. Taking a vast army with him, Ravan set off to conquer Lanka. The three brothers prostrated at the feet of their grand-father, Sumali; their father Ratnashrava and their mother, Kaikasi and received their heartfelt benedictions. Kaikasi while blessing them with success, spoke in a voice choked with emotion. "My darling sons ! Proceed fearlessly. The goddess of Victory is standing at the gates of Lanka awaiting your arrival to garland you; and to crown your endeavours with glorious success. You must eradicate injustice; you must avenge the slaying of your grand-father Mali and you must return home triumphantly after decimating the enemies and after liberating Lanka from their cruel clutches."

As soon as the princes left the harem, Queen Mandodari came there accompanied by Tadinmala and Pankajashri, carrying holy rice-grain, fruits, coconuts and *Kumkum* etc. in gold plates. They placed *Kumkum tilak* on the foreheads of the three princes, Dashmukh Ravan, Kumbhakarna and Vibhishan; and performed *Arti* to them wishing them a glorious victory; and bade them farewell, with smiling faces.

The vast court-yard in front of the palace was teeming with thousands of the Rakshasa warriors. Tremendous cries of victory reverberated in the sky. Moving slowly but majestically, the three Princes sat in their respective chariots. The horses neighed enthusiastically. As soon as the court-priest gave them a signal, Dashmukh Ravan's chariot moved majestically. The march of victory commenced.

The whole sky began to reverberate with the commotion of the Rakshasa army and their deafening cries of victory. Heavenly beings caused a shower of flowers over the princes. The sun-god of the million radiant rays, for a moment emerged from behind clouds and shone out in all his splendour. The whole earth became resplendent with the incomparable radiance of the sun as if the sun-god was blessing them with victory.

The Rakshasa army led by the three princes left Patala Lanka and began marching towards Lanka. Dashmukh Ravan was at the head of the army, commanding it. Kumbhakarna was marching slowly immersed in his own slumberous thoughts absent-mindedly. Just then, Vibhishan's hand fell on his shoulder. Vibhishan said, "Dear brother! Why are you thinking so deeply? What are you thinking of?"

But Kumbhakarna did not pay heed to what he said. He was lost in his own slumberous thoughts. Would he be Kumbhakarna if he woke up from his slumber at the very first call? Vibhishan thought for a few moments and then took a sharp and pointed arrow from his quiver. He fixed the arrow to his bow and took aim; and released it.

The arrow ran by Kumbhakarna's ear-rings with a whizzing noise. Suddenly, Kumbhakarna was upset and he leaped a little from his place. At once, he took up his mace and looked around angrily to find out who had shot the arrow. At this point, he saw Vibhishan near him with a smiling face.

"Oh! I think this is your heroism!"

"No brother. No! That is not my heroism; it is your younger brother's" and the two brothers burst into uproarious laughter.

"What do you want to say ? Tell me."

"Only this. Why should not we two alone fight against Vaishnavan ?"

"What do you mean ?"

"We shall entreat Dashmukh Ravan to give us an opportunity to show our valour and prowess and to see what we are capable of."

"But will he agree to this ?" Kumbhakarna said doubtfully.

"Let us make an entreaty to him and see what he says".

"All right", Kumbhakarna drove his chariot abreast of that of Vibhishan. The two brothers went in search of Ravan but he was at a great distance; and could not be seen.

Being disappointed, he said, "I think our elder brother has gone ahead."

"If so, we too shall go forward. We will be able to see him at some place or the other." The two brothers began marching ahead with the speed of wind.

Dashmukh Ravan was riding on horse-back ahead of the army, leading it and commanding it.

Approaching him, Kumbhakarna said raising his voice a little.

"Dear brother !"

"What's the matter ?"

"We want to make an entreaty to you".

"I see ! Come on. Tell me what it is," he said bending a little towards Kumbhakarna.

Kumbhakarna stuttered, "Kindly permit us to fight against Vaishnavan; and we will destroy Lanka, in a few moments."

"Then !"

Kumbhakarna could not say anything. He could not think of anything to say to his elder brother.

Noticing the agitation of his younger brothers, Dashmukh Ravan said, "Dear brothers! you two have already given Vaishnavan news good enough for him. You have already made him taste your heroism. You have made him spend sleepless nights in worry and agitation. Now, the time has come for me to satisfy my itching hands also. Let me reduce the itching of my hands".

Within a short time, Dashmukh Ravan's vast army reached the frontiers of Lanka. Vaishnavan also came out of Lanka with his vast army, countless warriors, and the Vidyadhar Kings who where his friends, to rout the invaders.

Vaishnavan was not an ordinary warrior. He was the very embodiment of exceptional valour and was as ferocious as the lion, the king of beasts.

What an irony of fate ! A brother fights against his brother. Brothers fight against each other and shed each other's blood. Vaishnavan was none other than the son of Kaushika; and Dashmukh Ravan was the son of Kaikasi, Kaushika and Kaikasi were sisters; and Vaishnavan and Dashmukh Ravan were brothers. The cataract of brotherly affection had dried up on account of the heat of enmity and hostility. If it were a deep lake or sea, it would not have dried up thus. They would not feel the impact of excessive heat.

Thus, blood-relationship is a cataract; but spiritual love is a vast lake abounding in the pellucid waters of pure affection. The Tirthankar Bhagwan has such love for all the *Jivas* in the Universe; and his love is an ocean which can never dry up. Whatever may be the intensity of heat, it will not dry up. Those cowherds and shepherds burnt Lord Mahavir with the terrific heat of their wicked actions; yet the Lord's heart which is an ocean of deep love never dried up and it never became empty. But in *samsar* where can we find an ocean of pure and selfless love ?

A terrible war broke out between Dashmukh Ravan and Vaishnavan. The earth was covered with floods of blood. The battle-field was covered with the dead bodies of soldiers, their severed heads, cut off arms and legs and with their weapons. Everywhere fiery sparks rose from clashing weapons. The whole atmosphere began to reverberate with cruel, wild and heroic cries of warriors. The whole earth began to shake with the moving screams and groans of the wounded soldiers; and horrified cries of animals and birds.

The dark, dense shadow of war enveloped Lanka and held it spell-bound. The vast army of Vaishnavan was devastated. When they found that they had been experiencing defeat at the hands of the Rakshasa army, those who were alive kept running away from the battle-field. Dashmukh Ravan was raging, over the battle-field like a whirlwind decimating large numbers of the enemy soldiers. His voice was lofty and loud when he issued commands to his soldiers. He blew over the battle-field like a gale blowing off all defences. He decimated the enemies by releasing magical and supernatural devices of miraculous efficacy. His proud and triumphant laughter stunned and stupefied the enemies. Everywhere, there was stampede; and cries of panic resounded in the sky. Dashmukh Ravan's army rushed forth issuing deafening cries of victory. The dream of many years came true. After a long time Dashmukh Ravan recaptured his ancestral Kingdom; and liberated it from the despotic clutches of enemies. His joy knew no bounds.

On account of the defeat and disgrace that he had suffered, a tremendous revolution had taken place in Vaishnavan's mind and outlook. The flames of hostility which were burning in his heart had subsided. He began passing through the corridors of his mind exploring them one by one; and began pursuing the path of deep contemplation and concentration on his soul. His heart and mind began tossing on the mighty waves of spiritual contemplation.

"Life appears to be a poisonous fruit after one has suffered disgrace and defeat. After having such an experience, people begin to despise life. Can a lake devoid of lotuses appear

fascinating ? When the tusks are broken, the elephant is worse than being dead. When the twigs and sprays are cut off, the tree is worse than being dry. When the cloud is shattered, the glory of the rainbow fades away. When man loses his honour, his interest in life disappears.

Probably defeat and disgrace fill everyone with worry, agitation, agony and anguish. Those who experience such agony and anguish feel that death is preferable to disgrace. It is in that mood that they realize the futility of hostility; and the fruitlessness of pride.

As Vaishnavan kept contemplating, checking that stream of thoughts, some inner voice said, "Is it proper to give up this life which is so valuable just because you have experienced defeat and disgrace ? Can these things inspire in you the desire to embrace death ? How far is it proper to end your life for this reason ? If one is alive one can build another house. If distressed by disgrace and defeat you destroy the basic cause itself, then how will it be ? "Neither the reed nor the flute will exist". Why should I not renounce the Kingdom for the sake of which I had to experience this humiliating disgrace ? After all, Kingdom and prosperity are not permanent; they do not accompany the soul to the other world. This Kingdom to safeguard which I have sweated and bled, has gone out of my hands".

Vibhishan and Kumbhakarna are not really my enemies. They are my great benefactors. They have bestowed a benefaction upon me, by waking me from my sleep of infatuation and have opened my eyes to the reality !

"Enough ! This is the proper thing to do. I will break off all the bondages of power and prosperity; and renounce the *Samsar*; I will receive the *Sadhudharma* and live in a forest away from these madding crowds; and maddening illusions. I will dedicate my life which is transient to the Paramatma. This is the true way to felicity and serenity."

"Vaishnavan ! Do not run away terrified by these agitations and agonies. Running away thus daunted by calamities is not true renunciation". A voice from the depths of his heart said.

“Am I running away from the battle-field ? Is not my spirit of renunciation genuine ?”

“No; No. Not at all ! this spirit of renunciation in you has been prompted by defeat, disgrace and humiliation. This is born out of sorrow; not out of knowledge.”

“No. This is false. This is untrue. I am not running away turning my back on my enemies.”

“If after tumbling down, one leaves a stony path and pursues a smooth path of peace and felicity, is it running away from the battle-field ? Is it running away in fear if one discards the company of a betrayer after one has experienced betrayal. The *Samsar* has betrayed me. Is it running away in disgrace and despair if one does not eat the food because he has realized that it is poisoned ? No. No. I am not running away from *Samsar*; I am not turning away from the *Samsar*; but I am only renouncing *Samsar*, changing my way of life. My spirit of renunciation is surely born out of knowledge; not out of sorrow, and anguish. If any sorrowful event opens the eyes of knowledge, and if in consequence, the spirit of renunciation appears; it is not born out of sorrow; on the contrary, it is born out of knowledge.

The defeat and humiliation I have suffered at the hands of Dashmukh Ravan have awakened in me the propensity to realize and estimate the truth; and has removed the scales of illusion from my eyes and have inspired in my mind the determination to carry out my supreme duty”.

“Yet, if you became a Shraman in this context, you will become a laughing stock; for all people will jeer at you; and will deride you. The prestige of your ancestors will become stained”.

“If I hesitate to carry out my noble determination out of the fear that people will criticise me, will it not be cowardice on my part ? Will I not become despicable in the eyes of the countless souls that have attained perfection ? Ah ! the censure of people is transient. Condemnation is not permanent. For fear of censure I cannot give up my long-cherished objective. If I

gain a great benefit in the future by experiencing a little harm now, that way is certainly acceptable. Instead of endlessly oscillating in the swings of the wheel of *Samsar*, I am determined to pursue the path of salvation; and this determination of mine is absolutely firm, unchangeable, immovable and unalterable.

And when the goddess of the evening, decorated the court-yards and pavilions of the firmament with fascinating and glorious colours; the court-yard and the pavilions of Vaishnavan's heart also became decorated with the sublime colours of renunciation, and self-discipline.

As a result of this, he discarded his royal robes and weapons on the battle-field. He descended from his beloved and faithful horse. He saluted all the friends and relatives who had gathered there and within a few moments he put on the dress of a sadhu. At that very moment, he discarded his inborn hostility against *jivas* and developed the lofty emotion of amity for all *jivas*. He uprooted and eradicated all the seeds and plants of anger, arrogance, pride, attachments and hatred that had been planted in that vast world of his heart; and sowed there the seeds of forgiveness, tenderness, simplicity and humility from the beginning, *de novo*.

The news that Vaishnavan had received the *Sadhudharma* spread like wild fire from one end of the battle-field to another. When Dashmukh Ravan who was deeply engaged in the war, heard of this he was greatly astounded. He thought that it was an incident the like of which had not occurred in the past and would not occur in the future. Dashmukh Ravan had not even dreamt that such a transformation would come about in Vaishnavan. He hurried to meet Vaishnavan. He saw Vaishnavan from a distance. But now Vaishnavan was not a King; was not the King of Lanka; but a sadhu with a radiant face. He was now the very embodiment of serenity and the spirit of renunciation. Ravan's heart was overwhelmed with emotions. From his eagle-eyes, two tears of joy dripped. At once, he alighted from his chariot. He took off his gold crown; he lay aside his weapons; and went walking up to Vaishnavan. Vaishnavan stood still like a sublime stone-image. Dashmukh Ravan saluted the feet of

Vaishnavan. His voice was choked with emotion; and from his eyes, the tears streamed out. He folded his hands; and said in a humble voice;

“Oh thou great man ! Kindly forgive your younger brother’s unpardonable blunder, I have committed a great offence against you. You may kindly continue to rule over Lanka without any fear or worry. We will go away somewhere. The earth abounds in gems. It is vast and boundless. We will go away to some other place and settle down there. But you kindly.....”

Dashmukh Ravan was not only a mighty hero who had attained mastery over thousands of accomplishments but also a mine of magnanimity and nobility. Every word uttered by him was plain and heartfelt and expressed sincere faith. When in anyone the latent and dormant sublime propensities wake up and become patent, he becomes influential and acquires tremendous personal magnetism. So naturally, we grow humble before such a man and we bow our heads in veneration to his sublime spiritual integrity and excellence.

Vidyadhar Vaishnavan was made of a different mettle. What he had renounced, he would not accept again. He was completely free from illusion and infatuation. Dashmukh Ravan made repeated entreaties; and implored Vaishnavan again and again to resume his reign over Lanka; but Vaishnavan did not budge an inch. The *Shraman*, Vaishnavan did not like to waste his life by entering the *Samsar* again. Once having entered the path of renunciation, he did not like to retrace his steps. It was impossible now for him to turn his face backwards.

If his renunciation was born out of illusion or sorrow, he would have listened to the words of Dashmukh Ravan; would have accepted his invitation and would have resumed his Kingship of Lanka. But because his renunciation was born out of sublime contemplations and knowledge, he refused to tread the path of worldliness again.

King Vaishnavan became a *Maharashi*, a great sage, in a short while.

VIII

AN INCIDENT IN THE ROYAL COURT

Dashmukh Ravan sat in his Pushpak Viman (supernatural airship). The Pushpak Viman shot up as if to touch the highest skies; traversed through the air and within a short while, it began to hover over the sky-high peaks of the Sametshikar mountain-ranges. From that unimaginable height, the beautiful peaks, valleys and forests of the Sametshikar appeared fascinating. They were like the dreams that gods breath on the burnished mirror of the world. The sublime Jin temple built of pure and pellucid stones of *Spatika* shone resplendent in the light of the stars. After having flown around the mountain, the Pushpak Viman landed in a broad and expansive area.

Dashmukh Ravan was an extraordinary devotee of the Jin. He felt supremely happy and gratified when he saw the extraordinary and the otherworldly Jin images situated in that noble land where countless Tirthankars had attained *Nirvan*. He was a supreme *Jnani*, having attained spiritual enlightenment. He was self-enlightened. After having attained a tremendous victory over Lanka, instead of spending his time in joyous jubiliations and celebrations and in sensual enjoyments in magnificent mansions and palaces, he thought it more profitable to spend time in seeing and worshipping the auspicious land of the Tirthankars. He began to despise sensual delights that he could enjoy in the company of countless beautiful damsels in his magnificent palace; on the contrary, he desired to visit holy places. Instead of hearing with elation the flattering songs of sycophants and bards he desired to adore the sublime virtues of the Tirthankars who reign over the three worlds. Instead of

desiring to sit on the throne of Lanka and to be glorified as the king of Lanka, he desired to perform circumambulations around the images of the Paramatma in those mountains and caves; and to be a devotee of the Paramatma.

After having been thus hallowed and sanctified physically and spiritually, he was descending the mountains with his relatives and friends, when, all of a sudden, he heard the trumpeting of a wild elephant of the forests. The relatives and friends who were following him were greatly agitated and horror-stricken. At a distance, he heard the wild leaping and trumpeting of a wild elephant.

Just then, a guard by name, Prahasta bowed to Ravan and said, "Your excellency ! Oh King of Lanka".

"What's the matter ?"

"This elephant that has been trumpeting thus is not an ordinary one".

"Then ?"

"It seems to be the King of elephants. It is the gem among elephants".

Glancing towards Prahasta with thoughtful eyes, Ravan said, "That means ?"

"This mighty elephant is absolutely worthy of being yours !" Prahasta said.

At once, Ravan proceeded in the direction from which the noises were heard. At some distance, he noticed an infatuated elephant trumpeting loudly and madly in the midst of thick bushes, in the dense part of the forest. Ravan went near it; and cast his eyes upon it and he was astounded to see it. It was not like any ordinary elephant of the forest. It was like a heavenly elephant with a beautiful, massive, fascinating body. From its intoxicated temples, a stream of fatty juice kept flowing like a river incessantly. Its long, pointed gold-coloured tusks shone resplendent in the light of the radiant sun. Ravan

watched the elephant with fascination. In a playful manner, he held it and sat upon it.

All the relatives and friends of Ravan came forward eagerly to take a look at the new elephant. All saw the elephant to their satisfaction.

Ravan said, "Brothers, what name shall we give this elephant?"

"We will call it a bulky buffalo. What other name can we give it?" said Kumbhakarna revealing his ignorance.

All burst into fits of laughter. Kumbhakarna's face hung in shame and he slipped away from there.

"Dear brother, I think we should call it *Vishwaratna* the gem of the universe!" Vibhishan said in a serious tone.

"*Lankabhushan* is a better name than that", said the commander coming forward a few paces.

All of them were sunk in utter indecisiveness in their search for an appropriate name for that mighty and magnificent elephant. Just then, a warrior said eagerly, "Why should we not name it *Shatrujit*?" All felt that the name "*Shatrujit*?" was appropriate to it, but Ravan the image of inspiration was silent. Hence, the enthusiastic commotion among the people subsided. All began to look towards Ravan to see what he would say.

After a little while, Ravan's voice which resembled the roar of the sea in its seriousness and elevation was heard, "We shall call it *Bhuvanalankar* (the ornament of the fourteen worlds). It is an invaluable treasure to us; so we shall call it *Bhuvanalankar*". The jubilant cries of triumph emerging from the crowd reverberated among the lofty peaks of the Samet-shikar.

Meanwhile, the radiant chariot of the sun-god drawn by the seven horses had disappeared behind the western horizon. The time had come for the arrival of the goddess of the evening

decked with divine graces. So, they decided to spend the night there. The intoxicated elephant was tied to a massive tree with a strong rope. The joy and jubilation of the Rakshasas knew no bounds. They were delighted and elated by the victory over Lanka and the visit to the holy land of Tirthankar Bhagwans and the attainment of *Bhuvanankar*, the gem among elephants. Certainly, it was a day of prosperity for the Rakshasas. Who is not delighted by the attainment of his objectives? The fulfilment of aspiration brings joy and happiness to all whether they are young or old people, men or women, human beings or animals and birds, whether they are bandits, robbers or sadhus or munis. All are delighted and elated by the fulfilment of their aspirations.

The fulfilment of aspirations is essential if one should experience delight and elation. But the attainment of objectives should be such that it is not impeded by any evils and it does not bring any harm.

The sun rose in the east. The eastern horizon became resplendent with the radiance of the rising sun. Birds were twittering in the trees. The earth seemed to be stretching its limbs and waking up into consciousness. Dashmukh Ravan woke from his sleep. He sat up on his bed deeply absorbed in some thoughts.

Just then a guard approached him respectfully and said, "Your Excellency, some Vidyadhar messenger desires to meet you. He is waiting for your permission. He says that, he has brought some secret message".

"Let him come into our presence", said Dashmukh Ravan, composing himself a little.

The Vidyadhar messenger approached Ravan; prostrated before him and then stood before him.

"What is the matter?"

"O King of Lanka! I am called Pavandurg. I am your faithful servant, 'I have brought a secret message to you'."

“Speak out without any fear or worry. There is no need to fear anything”.

“Mighty King, after you left Pathal Lanka, Suryaraja and Yaksharaja, the sons of Kishkindhi, the king of Vanaras, also marched towards their city. But after they reached the city, they were filled with wonder and repentance. But then Yama, a valiant warrior of Indra, the emperor had settled down there. So, Suryaraja and Yaksharaja were stopped at the border and prevented from entering the city”.

“Oh! how proud and arrogant he is. Stealing and then high-handed dealing”, Dashmukh Ravan was excited to hear this because of his affection for his friends.

“Yes. My dear king? Subsequently, Suryaraja and Yaksharaja, in order to reconquer their kingdom declared a war against Yama and fought a terrible war. But Yama was invincible, extremely valiant and the very embodiment of destructive attitude. So all their efforts came to nought. Both the Vanara princes and Vanara warriors fought ferociously but they could not remain on the battle-field for long. Yama captured the princes and the Vanara army and put them in a dismal prison which is like hell.

You know very well that for generations, the Vanaras and Rakshasas have been friendly; and they are tied together by deep bondages of affection. Moreover, from all points of view, they are worthy of your love. Therefore, O great king! it is your duty to liberate them and to help them in this time of distress”.

Dashmukh Ravan gnashed his teeth in flaming fury. His face reddened with anger and he hissed through his nostrils like a king cobra. He said with an overpowering emotion.

“If we think of it objectively, I myself have been the cause for this distress and adversity of my friends. Those who are in the refuge of someone have to experience distress and adversity only on account of the helplessness of the one who gives them refuge. I have not been cautious regarding their safety

and security; and now this Yama has inflicted these indignities and agonies upon them. I am Dashmukh Ravan. I will not have peace of mind until I take revenge against Yama. I will destroy all the defences of Yama's kingdom; and I will do justice to Suryaraja and Yaksharaja, the sons of my friend".

And Ravan who was out to make a war ordered the beating of war-drums. On hearing the sound of the drums and the bugles, the Rakshasa warriors were amazed.

"We do not know who is in for trouble today", said the talkative Kumbhakarna, waving his mace in the air and peering at his younger brother, Vibhishan.

"He who is swollen with pride !"

"But who is he ?"

"Who else can it be ? It is the pretender-Yama, the *Dikhpalak* (ruler of one of the eight directions) of the pretender-Indra".

Then, Dashmukh Ravan sat in his *Pushpak Viman* and set off in the direction of Kishkindha, with his vast army.

On the way, he saw the hell-like prison-houses built by Yama. His heart shook with compassion and grief when he saw the oppression and humiliation that his dear friend's sons and the Vanara warriors were experiencing in that veritable hell. They were being subjected to tremendous tortures there. The *Yamadoots* (the servants of Yama) were making Yaksharaja and Suryaraja drink boiling liquid of lead. They were beating them on rocks as if they were clothes; and with their sharp swords, they were cutting off their limbs. How could Dashmukh Ravan, the very embodiment of extraordinary courage and compassion bear to see those heart-rending sights ? Within a moment, he used his miraculous devices and decimated those servants of Yama and destroyed his hell !

Even after great men arrive, quarrels, wranglings, fights and anguish continue just as even after a light is brought, darkness continues to exist.

The guard of the hell, ran shouting and screaming and creating a furore to the refuge of Yama. His throat was choked with fear and horror. He could not articulate a single word. He stood before Yama with folded hands, simply making signs and gestures unable to utter a word. Seeing the horror-stricken guard, even Yama fell into deep thoughtfulness for a while. Even before Yama could ask him what had happened, he said in a faltering manner.

"Oh ! ... Your Excellency ! ... we are being killed and destroyed".

"How and by whom ?"

"Your Excellency ! Dashmukh Ravan has descended upon Kishkindha like a raging storm destroying everything. He destroyed our hell; and has liberated our enemies, and now..."

"And now the time has come for the death of that villain Dashanan ! What does he think of us ?"

At once, Yama's face grew red with anger. He became infuriated. He ordered that the gates of the city of Kishkindha should be closed, Trumpets were blown; and their sounds reverberated in the sky. Accompanied by countless soldiers, Yama set off to fight against Ravan.

Dashmukh was ready for a war. The two armies collided and began to fight in a ferocious manner. Within a few moments, the land of Kishkindha was covered with floods of steaming blood.

Yama, at this point, jumped into the fray. He began raining arrows on Dashmukh Ravan, with the aim of making him lick the dust. But Ravan was not an ordinary warrior; he was a mighty hero who had mastered a thousand arts and accomplishments. He shot his arrows in such a way that the arrows of Yama were cut to pieces on the way. The Yamaraj pounced upon Ravan weilding his *Yamadanda*. Dashmukh Ravan released a supernatural weapon called *Kshurapra* and broke his *Yamadanda* into pieces. Again Yama rained a shower of

arrows. Within a few moments, the whole sky was covered with arrows. Dashmukh Ravan's anger flamed up terribly. He was greatly irritated. Until now, he had been fighting deeming it a game. But he was angered and excited by Yama's crooked ways and decided to end the war. He collided against Yama like an intoxicated elephant. He shot very sharp arrows and cut off Yama's limbs. The soldiers of Yama's army began to flee the battle-field. Yama was caught in a dilemma. He fell into deep thoughtfulness; "I will have to lose my life unnecessarily. Instead of dying thus, it is better to get away from here. This kingdom is not mine anyway. Indra gave it to me; and until today, I have been enjoying it. If one is alive one can attain prosperity again. So, it is beneficial to go to Indra".

At once, Yama ran away from there and reached Ratanupur. He stood before Indra folding his hands and shivering with fear.

"My lord ! I discard to-day the position of Yama you gave me. I cannot bear this heavy responsibility; and I am not also fascinated by the status of Yama. I am not interested in it. I do not mind whether you like it or not; but I am giving up my position of Yama. I am not at all interested in it. My life is in danger; and Dashmukh Ravan is coming raging like a storm to slay you. He is cruel, wild, terrible... a veritable destroyer... Dashmukh Ravan is speeding to this place to destroy you..."

"Why do you keep prattling ? Tell me what the matter is", Indra said infuriated.

"Oh lord ! Dashmukh Ravan is a Yama (god of death) to Yama himself. He is supremely valiant and heroic. He has committed heart-rending enormities".

"All right. What enormities has he committed ? Will you please tell me ?"

"Oh lord ; He destroyed hell. He beat and drove away the guards. He waged a war and killed countless soldiers".

"What else ?"

"Oh! what else is necessary? Before this, he routed Vaishnavan and occupied Lanka. He grabbed the *Pushpak Viman*.

"What did you say?" Indra was greatly shocked and agitated to hear that Ravan had conquered Lanka. He was greatly stupefied. Suddenly, he roared out. "How audacious of him! He is after all an urchin! He is yet a suckling infant! Even moustaches have not appeared on his lips. He has invaded our country. We will not leave him unpunished".

"Oh lord! Now, Dashmukh Ravan is not a suckling-child. He is a warrior of exceptional prowess. He has attained mastery over one thousand miraculous weapons and arts". The Chief Minister said, speaking in the middle, trying to persuade him to see reason; and he continued: "Making a war against a mighty hero tantamounts to an invitation to death and to the ruin of your line". In order to ward off the danger that had arisen the old and experienced Chief Minister gave Yama the city of Sursangit which was located on the Vaithadhya mountain. Yama was made the ruler of that city.

As soon as Yama ran away from the battle-field, his army which resembled a vast cloud of locusts began to take to their heels. Within a few moments, the clouds of calamity that had gathered over Kishkindha disappeared. Dashmukh Ravan entered the city with all pomp and show; and established Suryaraja on the throne of Kishkindha and Yaksharaja on the throne of Yakshapur.

After that, Dashmukh Ravan returned to Lanka. On hearing about his achievements, Sumali his grand-father, Ratnashrava, his father and Kaikasi, his mother swayed with delight and elation. Within a few days after that, Dashmukh Ravan was crowned king of Lanka. The prince became the king.

Waves of joy and jubilation rose in the hearts of the citizens of Lanka. Who would not experience delight and elation when a mighty hero like Ravan became the king of their country?

Some days passed thus.

Once, Dashmukh Ravan thought of the holy mountain *Meru*. He entertained a strong desire to visit that holy place and to worship the permanent Jin images situated there.

“Auspicious plans should be carried out at once”.

He decided to go to *Meru* on a pilgrimage with his friends and relatives and made arrangements for going there and to worship the Jin images; and at the appointed time, he set off with all pomp and show on a pilgrimage to *Meru*. But after Ravan left for *Meru*, a thrilling event took place in Lanka. No one had even dreamt of such a thing.

A certain Vidyadhar by name Khara, the son of Megh-prabha was travelling through the sky towards Lanka. At that time, Dashmukh Ravan's sister Chandranakha happened to be sitting at a window of her magnificent palace, watching the beauty of nature.

Khar, the Vidyadhar happened to see Chandranakha; and he became infatuated with her, fascinated by her beauty. He watched her beauty spell-bound. A spring of love surged out in his heart for Chandranakha. When her eyes met his eyes and when she saw him, she too became infatuated with him. The language of love removed the distance between them and united their hearts. As a result of this, Khar abducted Chandranakha and went away to Pathal Lanka.

Chandrodar, the son of King Aditya was ruling over Pathal Lanka. It was Dashmukh Ravan who had made him king of Pathal Lanka. Khar fought against Chandrodar and turned him away; and he occupied the throne of Pathal Lanka.

When, after completing his pilgrimage, Ravan returned to Lanka, he came to know of this event. When he heard that in his absence, his sister had been abducted, he became furious; and burnt like a comet. It did not take much time for Mandodari to know the matter. She at once realized the impact that this event brought about on her husband.

"What is the use of flaring up thus?" Mandodari said in a humble manner.

"Your idea?"

"What you are now thinking of is not only unnecessary but also improper".

"But how do you know what I am thinking of?"

"Oh! If I cannot understand what you are thinking of what is the use of my having been your wife and life-partner all these days? Am I not yourself in a way? Am I not a part of yourself? I know your heart. Just by looking at your face, I can say what you are thinking of", Mandodari said in a pleasing voice.

"In that case, tell me what I am now thinking of".

"You are thinking of inflicting some severe punishment on him who has abducted your sister".

"Indeed, you have spoken the truth".

"But that is not at all proper. Kindly think of the matter calmly. If a man does not think calmly about the events that take place in his life, and if he acts rashly and thoughtlessly, at the end, he will have to shed tears of bitter regret."

"Then, what do you suggest?"

"Please give up your idea of fighting a war against him. A girl has to be handed over to someone or the other as a deposit, placed in our hands. When the girl chooses and marries a young man who belongs to a noble family what is wrong in this? Khara is an excellent match to Chandranakha, in all respects. Not only this; Khar will remain loyal and friendly to you in the future. So, I suggest that you send some member of the Royal family to Pathal Lanka and arrange for the marriage of Chandranakha with Khar, with all *eclat* and grandeur. You also hand over the royal throne of Pathal Lanka to him. This is the ideal thing to do".

Dashmukh heard every word of Mandodari with deep concentration. He was greatly amazed at her shrewdness, political wisdom and practical sense.

Mandodari always led Ravan on the path of peace. Not only this; her aspiration was to provide an ethical foundation to his political policies and to enhance his glory and greatness. She knew very well that if Khar came to know of this he would develop amity and affection for Dashmukh Ravan and that he would remain a loyal political ally to Ravan.

Kumbhakarna and Vibhishan also endorsed the opinion of Mandodari, with one voice. As a result of this, Ravan sent for Maya and Maricha, and ordered them to go to Pathal Lanka.

The two Rakshasas went to Pathal Lanka; and in accordance with Ravana's instructions, they celebrated the marriage of Chandranakha and Khar; crowned him king of Pathal Lanka and returned to Lanka.

The wheel of time continued to revolve; and some years passed.

In course of time, the political policies and administration of Lanka were established on sound foundations. Ravan was greatly admired for his political wisdom and his excellent administrative measures in all the countries in and around Vaithadhya. Dashmukh Ravan was a great military hero and a fearless and invincible warrior; he was also a great lover of the graces and glories of nature. He was extremely sensitive to the beauties of nature. In his court, he used to arrange discussions. Many subjects were discussed by experts in those various fields; and they tried to establish the truth. There used to be discussions on the various aspects of the country's foreign policy, its relations with other countries, the progress or backwardness of the various countries, out of intellectual curiosity. Scholars, specialists and experts used to discuss many puzzling problems of state policy. Just as warriors were honoured and rewarded, even artists were honoured and rewarded. On every important occasion, they were thus honoured and rewarded.

Ravan took an extraordinary interest in music and he was greatly delighted, whenever great musicians came to his court. Countless musicians came and delighted Ravan with their performances. Artists came to his court and delighted his heart by painting magnificent pictures. Dancers delighted Ravan with their fascinating performances. Great poets and writers came to his court; and he enjoyed their magnificent poetry and other creative works. He was a great patron and connoisseur of the fine arts.

Dashmukh Ravan lived a life of prosperity and luxury. He amassed a fabulous fortune. His palace had everything that anyone desired. His dinners were made delicious by delicacies brought from all over the world. In his court, there lived a large number of musicians, painters, artists, dancers, actors, actresses, poets and sculptors; and Ravan used to forget himself in the enjoyment of those arts.

Once, the story narrated by a story-teller became the source of a new event. Ravan was hearing that story.

Suryaraja, the Vanara hero was spending time happily in Kishkindha. A beautiful lady by name Indumalini was his queen. Indumalini gave birth to a son who was named Vali. Even as a boy, Vali was radiant and valiant. He was the very embodiment of heroism. He began to display his miraculous powers and abilities as soon as he stepped on the threshold of youth. He became renowned throughout Kishkindha for the miraculous feats of heroism he performed even as a boy.

Every day, as a matter of routine, he used to go round the island called *Jambudweep*; and worship the Jin images situated at various places, in magnificent temples.

Sometime later, Indumalini gave birth to another son. He was named Sugriv. Later, a daughter was born; and she was named Suprabha. Yaksharaja, the younger brother of Suryaraja had a beautiful wife by name Harikanta. They too had two sons. The two boys were named Nala and Nila. They were also valiant.

The old king of Vanaras as soon as his sons entered the threshold of youth, decided to renounce the *Samsar* and to become a *Shraman*. Accordingly, on an auspicious day, he placed on the shoulders of Vali the responsibility of ruling over Kishkindha; became a *Shraman* and began to pursue the path of *Moksha*. He performed severe and austere penance to destroy his *Karmas*, and in course of time he attained liberation.

After Suryaraja, Vali became the king of Kishkindha. He made his younger brother, Sugriv, heir-designate to the throne of Kishkindha. Sugriv was like another Vali. He was a young man of great purity of thought; and he loved justice and fair-play. He was the very embodiment of magnanimity, kindness and he was not inferior to anyone in valour and militaric prowess. Vali became very powerful with the help of his heroic brothers Sugriv, Nala and Nila.

In this manner the narrator narrated the story of Vali in the court of Dashmukh Ravan. He described every heroic feat of Vali in an impressive style; and praised Vali. But he did not realize that his genuine adoration of Vali's greatness became the seed of a terrible fight in the future.

Even the praise bestowed on men of virtue, sometimes, proves disastrous to them; and may cause terrible anguish to them. Therefore, we should not praise or glorify men of virtues and abilities in the presence of those who do not like others being praised and glorified.

In this world most people do not seem to approve of the adoration bestowed upon others. Those who approve of it, and heartily honour the men of virtues and abilities are rare.

Dashmukh Ravan could not tolerate the greatness of Vali. He began to entertain evil plans to pull down Vali and to compel him to surrender to him. Actually, Dashmukh Ravan became deeply absorbed in his evil designs to put down Vali and to make him subservient to him.

Dismissing the court for the day, he went to the chamber where he carried out secret political deliberations. Soon, he sent for a trustworthy follower. He carried on a prolonged deliberation with him and then sent a message to Vali by a messenger.

The messenger set off to Kishkindha carrying the message.



IX

VALI, THE VALIANT

The messenger travelled with the speed of wind and arrived at a garden outside the city of Kishkindha. The messenger stood in the garden for a while watching the fascinating city of Kishkindha. The extraordinary grandeur and colourfulness of the city made him oblivious of himself for a while. If the holy flags kept waving over the magnificent Jin temples here and there, in the temple people were worshipping the lord ringing holy bells. The melodious voices of students and devotees reciting or reading holy hymns were cleansing and sanctifying the atmosphere. Countless citizens were seen moving about on the roads paved with marble carrying out their daily activities. All the mansions and roads of Kishkindha looked cheerful and colourful in the garments of incomparable prosperity, boundless felicity and bubbling youthfulness. The messenger spent sometime watching the city with fascination; and then he proceeded to the Royal court. Wherever he passed, he heard people wholeheartedly praising and admiring Vali. Wherever he went, he heard people narrating stories of Vali's valour and virtues. He heard countless stories of his astounding valour, exceptional virtues and his unexampled abilities as a warrior and ruler. All people were heartily praising Vali's invincible courage, unflinching faith in the Paramatma and his tremendous heroism. Everywhere, everyone said the same thing :

May our King Vali be always victorious !

May our King Vali be always glorious !

After having passed through the main roads of the city, he reached the courtyard of the palace. When he saw the palace from a closer point, he felt that for the time being, he was lifted above the earth; and was possessed of delights not dreamt of in his life. It was a stately palace which had been shaped by fortune's fervent fancies.

The grandeur of the palace stupefied him; and made him forget himself for a while. Compared to Kishkindha, Lanka's palace, its royal splendour, and its prosperity appeared to be dull and ordinary.

Just then, a guard of the palace came forward. He looked at the messenger who stood with his head bowed, and said, "Victory to the Jinendra !"

"Victory to the Jinendra !"

The messenger also replied saying, "Victory to Jinendra".

Both were servants of kings who were devotees of the Jin. So, it was natural for them to greet each other uttering the name of the Jin.

"You are welcome to Kishkindha. What can I do for you ?"

"I am the messenger of Dashmukh Ravan, the King of Lanka; and I want to meet His Excellency Vali urgently".

The guard told him to follow him and proceeded towards the palace. The messenger followed him. They passed through several chambers; and came to the main door of the Royal court. The guard, by means of a sign, suggested to the messenger to wait there; and then he went in and informed Vali of the arrival of a messenger from Ravan, the King of Lanka.

"Bring him in," said Vali.

The messenger entered the Royal court; saluted Vali respectfully and humbly; and said :

"Victory to His Excellency !"

"Oh ! King ! I am the messenger of Dashmukh Ravan, the heroic king of Lanka, I have brought a special message from him".

"You are most welcome. Your arrival has filled us with joy. Tell me what made our dear friend Ravan think of us".

"My lord. There is nothing that you do not know. Yet I have to carry out my duty. Our king, Dashmukh Ravan says that your illustrious ancestor Shrikant was a contemporary of our heroic ancestor Kirtidhaval; and that when Shrikant was defeated by his enemies, it seems he sought the refuge of Virdhaval. King Virdhaval gave absolute protection to Shrikant, his brother-in-law and made him the king of Vanardweep. Since then, every king who ascended the throne of Vanardweep out of gratitude accepted the overlordship of the king of Lanka and the kings of Lanka of the Rakshasa dynasty have been treating them nobly as their honoured suzerains. They have always been rendering help and extending co-operation to the kings of Vanardweep whenever they needed such help or whenever they were in difficulties or adversity. They were always ready and willing to safeguard the honour and prestige of the kings of Vanardweep. It is not unknown to you who released your father, honourable Adityaraja from the torments of the hell improvised by Yama and who established again Adityaraja as the king of Vanardweep. All this is not unknown to you. Oh King ! you are the noble son of that esteemed king of the Vanaras and you are supremely valiant; and you are the very image of justice and ethical excellence and wisdom; therefore, you must also walk in the path of your ancestors and accept Dashmukh Ravan's overlordship; and you must occupy a proper place as his suzerain."

Of course, the messenger conveyed his message clothing it in polite and humble language. But every word of his message pierced the heart of Vali, the Valiant, like a sharp and pointed arrow. The flames of anger and animosity arose in his heart. His face and body began to shake with indignation. But without revealing his inner thoughts and feelings, he heard the message

upto the last, with oceans of patience and with the dignity and serenity of the ocean of peace.

Seriousness and dignified behaviour do not allow any distortions or aberrations to enter human life. But if man does not possess patience and seriousness, even small agitations cause aberrations.

The innerself of Vali, the valiant, had grown elevated, serious, magnanimous and all-embracing on account of his listening to and contemplating on the voice of the Jins. Therefore, he replied in a pleasant and agreeable voice :

“Dear messenger ! We admire your discernment. We have heard carefully the message of Dashmukh Ravan, the King of Lanka as delivered by you. We have also thought about it deeply. You please convey to Dashmukh Ravan this message of mine.

“I am not unaware of the tender and friendly relations that have been in existence through generations between the Rakshasa dynasty and the Vanara dynasty; on the contrary, I am fully aware of the fact that between them there have been in existence friendly and cordial relations. My heartfelt desire is that these relations of mutual cordiality, co-operation and friendship between us should continue unbroken in the future”.

“But let him remember that our relations have not been those of overlord and suzerain; or master and servant at any time in the past; nor will, such relations exist between us in the future. In the past, the two royal families helped and co-operated with each other at times of difficulty and adversity like equals and they will continue to help each other in future also. Was there anytime when one did not extend help and co-operation to the other when he was in difficulties ? and was there any time when one after receiving help from the other became averse to him ? Can cordial and friendly relations end in becoming the relations of master and slave ? Of course, the king of Lanka liberated our ancestors from the hell of Yama; but can this make him our overlord ? Can this make us his

subordinates and slaves ? No. No. Such a thing can never happen. We do not at all agree to that condition. Are we not incomparable devotees and followers of Vitrag ? We shall never bear with injustice; on the contrary, we shall not hesitate even a little to lose our life if it is necessary in order to save our self-respect and honour. The valiant never fear death; they value only honour."

"Dear messenger ! This Vali bows his head only to Jineshwar Bhagwan and to noble spiritual heads. I deem only them my lords. I consider only them as the greatest benefactors; and I worship them with body, mind and wealth. I really wonder since when the king of Lanka has been entertaining this funny desire for power over us. Actually, the cordial relations that have been continuing like the sacred river Ganga have been sullied today by Ravan's arrogance. He has, as if with a sharp weapon, cut off the bonds of cordiality and amity that have been in existence between the two families.

"Moreover, your king Ravan has been born in a family with which we have been friendly. So, I respect him as my elder brother. His achievements and his mastery over a thousand powers have made him forget sanity, rationality and the limits of decency. But, yet, you may rest assured, that I will not take any step that will bring disgrace to the Vanara dynasty and stain its resplendent glory; or any step which we will regret later. Yes ! If he adopts any undesirable and offensive step, we will be constrained to prepare ourselves to face the challenge with all our might. We shall not even by a mistake adopt the path of war; because such a step would destroy our cordial relations which have been in existence for generations. Please inform your king that in spite of all this, he cannot see the truth blinded by false prestige and pride, we are ready to face every kind of challenge."

At once, the peaks and valleys of Kishkindha reverberated with the news. The news of the impending war between Kishkindha and Lanka spread like wild fire among people in the mansions, streets, circles and squares of the city of Kishkindha.

Sugriv, Nala and Nila and various leading warriors and commanders were overawed with the news. The representatives of the Vanara Dynasty were shocked to hear the news. The cordiality and friendliness that had been in existence through generations between the two royal families were, in a moment, destroyed, by the arrogance and false-prestige of one person. All this was the result of Ravan's intolerance of the Vanaras' progress and prosperity. All this had been caused by Ravan's green-eyed jealousy. Dashmukh Ravan could not tolerate a friendly Kingdom's honour, prestige and popularity. It was as if this event forecast the terrible evils that would overwhelm Ravan in the future. Someone has rightly said, "*Vinashakale Viparitha Buddhihi*". "Insanity and irrationalities appear at a time of impending decimation". Coming evils cast their shadows before; otherwise, such malice and ill-will would not have arisen in Ravan's heart against the friends of his family who had lived in mutual amity and cordiality with his ancestors. Soon, the messenger returned to Lanka; met Dashmukh Ravan; and conveyed to him the message that Vali had sent in reply to his message.

What else would result from that situation? Who can prevent what is destined to occur? What had to happen, happened. On hearing Vali's reply, Ravan flared up furiously and his intention to fight a war became intense. Every part of Lanka resounded with the news. The Rakshasa warriors got ready for the war at once and were waiting for orders from the king. When the command was issued, they set off towards Kishkindha like a cloud of locusts; trampling down everything; and having reached Kishkindha, they pounced upon the Vanara army. Vali also was not careless. He knew very well that as soon as the messenger returned to Lanka and conveyed his reply to Dashmukh Ravan, he would come like a whirlwind to invade Kishkindha. All the people of Kishkindha had an unshakable faith in Vali's capacity as a great warrior. They were confident that Vali was a mighty warrior of invincible courage and prowess. They believed that Vali could not be vanquished by anyone; and he would always be victorious. Even the

mightiest forces could not vanquish Vali, the valiant. He was a warrior of unexampled heroism and tremendous abilities; so, they were absolutely fearless inspite of the prospect of a war with Dashmukh Ravan.

Vali set off to the battle-field with Sugriv, Nala and Nila and countless other warriors. He loved war; and he was never afraid of war.

There broke out a terrible war between the two armies. Floods of blood began to flow in the battle-field. The battle-field was covered with severed heads and bodies of warriors. Countless innocent people fell victims to the fiery flames of animosity and intolerance. The entire battle-field was a scene of unmitigated horror. It was a frightful and disgusting scene. The merciless massacre of so many people moved Vali to compassion. He thought within himself, "Alas! What is the use of this violence and bloodshed? What do we get by committing this violence and killing of people? I am here to safeguard the lives of people; not to destroy them. I should be a preserver; not a destroyer. My duty is to take care of them and not to decimate them". Thinking thus, he drove his chariot towards Ravan. On approaching Dashmukh Ravan, addressing him, he said in a dignified and thoughtful manner.

"Oh Dashmukh! A sensible and thoughtful man would not kill the smallest creature. Even the decimation of the tiniest creature will not bring glory to a wise man. It only brings disgrace and dishonour. When that is so how can anyone attain glory by the decimation of human beings? You may say that this killing of human beings is necessary to attain victory in the battle-field. You may say that this kind of violence is essential for the attainment of glory. But I feel that this unnecessary destruction of human beings can be prevented if the two heroes concerned fight a duel. You are a heroic warrior. You have attained mastery over a thousand arts and accomplishments. Moreover, you are a great devotee of the Paramatma and as such you are a noble *Shravak*. Therefore, you stop this fighting

on account of which you will have to suffer terrific torments in hell.

The words of wisdom spoken thus with dignity by Vali shook Dashmukh to the brims of his being. Those truthful words of wisdom spoken by Vali had the desired effect on Dashmukh Ravan. Dashmukh realized the secret of *Dharma*. As a result of this, the bugles sang truce among both the Rakshasa and the Vanara warriors and soldiers; and there was a cessation of war. But, at once, a tremendous duel commenced between Vali, the valiant and Dashmukh, the dangerous.

Dashmukh Ravan, released against Vali some devices of supernatural power, reciting the relevant *Mantras*. Vali also released counter-weapons of miraculous power and broke Ravan's weapons to pieces. Moments, and hours went leaping like a deer. All the miraculous weapons released by Ravan, the great Vidyadhar, proved ineffective against Vali.

As Ravan continued to fail in attacking Vali, he grew furious. He began to burn with the flames of anger. At the end, he used his beloved sword, "*Chandrahās*".

Dashmukh Ravan pounced upon Vali wielding *Chandrahās*, the dreadful weapon which would surely destroy anyone against whom it was used. All of a sudden, there arose a great commotion among the warriors of the Vanara army. Loud cries of distress and horror rose from the Vanara army. Blood; steaming blood; not tears began streaming from the Vanara warriors like Sugriv, Nala and Nila. They began to shudder with terror while waves of joy and jubilation rose from the Rakshasa army. Their delight and elation knew no bounds.

But just then, an unexpected event occurred. No one had even imagined that such an event would come about. Dashmukh Ravan rushed towards Vali like an intoxicated bull waving the dreadful sword *Chandrahās*; but Vali easily held him with his left hand like a ball; took him up and threw him high into the sky in the twinkling of an eye as a result of which Ravan went up rolling like a ball. The poor, lifeless *Chandrahās* was in the

hand of Ravan, absolutely ineffective. When Vali picked with his left hand Ravan himself and threw him up like a ball; what could *Chandrahās* do ?

The Rakshasa heroes like Kumbhakarna, Vibhishan, Indrajit and Meghavahan were stunned and stupefied and kept staring at Ravan who was performing somersaults in the air. They stood breathless watching the extraordinary event. Meanwhile, Vali performed not one or two but four circumambulations around the island of *Jambudweep*. He performed four complete circumambulations.

The condition of Ravan who had been thrown up into the sky was pitiable. He had been bitterly humiliated. He could not bear with the humiliation that Vali had inflicted upon him in the presence of thousands of warriors and soldiers. His pride and his sense of self-importance were deeply offended. Ravan who was a reputed hero; and who had mastered a thousand accomplishments was defeated and disgraced by Vali. He was absolutely powerless against Vali. This was a terrible mockery of fate.

After having performed four circumambulations around the Jambudweep, Vali descended to earth. It was only then that he released Ravan. Ravan's head was bent in shame and disgrace. His usually radiant face became dull and depressed. It was as if the prince had become a pauper and a haughty lord had become a humble liegeman on one side, there was the Rakshasa army and on the other side there was the Vanara army. Between them stood Vali and Ravan.

Vali sent his eye over his vast army; and said in a voice which was like thunder rolling in the sky :

“There is no one in this world whom I salute and whom I worship except the omniscient *Arihant*. I will not bow my head to anyone else in this Universe. Fie upon your hatred caused by your pride and false sense of prestige on account of which you tried to subjugate me and to make me surrender to you. You tried to subjugate me on account of your intolerance; and

the result is the miserable plight in which you find yourself now.

I am fully sensible of the benefactions that you and your ancestors bestowed upon my father and mother and other ancestors; and that is why to-day, I have not killed you. Not only that; I am also handing over my kingdom to you. But bear this point in mind. As long as I am alive, you cannot have unopposed domination in this world. Moreover, as long as I am here you can never dream of overlordship over Kishkindha. I am now receiving the supremely efficacious *Parameshwari deeksha* on my own. From to-day onwards, Sugriv will be the king of Kishkindha; and he will rule the Kingdom as a subordinate king; and will obey your commands. Go back. May you be prosperous”.

The eyes of Sugriv, Nala, Nila and of all the Vanara warriors grew wet with tears. Their voices were choked with surging emotions. Their bright faces became bleak and blighted with sorrow. They tried to control their grief; and kept looking with eyes full of love and honour, at Vali who was going away far, far away. They kept sobbing with an uncontrollable grief. Bitter gloom and death-like silence filled the whole atmosphere.

Dashmukh Ravan was greatly stupefied by Vali's action of undertaking the *Deeksha*. He stood confounded for a few moments. He was mentally upset; and agonizingly perturbed. Suddenly, his eyes welled up with tears. Yet, one question kept vexing him. “Why did Vali take this sudden decision to renounce the *Samsar*? What circumstances have impelled him to proceed on the path of *Samyam* (the life of a Muni).” Outwardly, this event seems to be natural; but it did not seem so when he thought of the deeper causes for his decision. This decision of Vali's appeared to have a far-reaching consequence and a deeper purpose than were evident outwardly. Only a short while ago, Vaishnavan, the Vidyadhar also had adopted the path of *Samyam*; and now Vali, the invincible had followed him making a tremendous sacrifice. The difference between the two was this. Vaishnavan had taken the *Deeksha* when he had

been defeated. But Vali had undertaken the *Deeksha* after he had achieved a tremendous victory over him. Both had become munis on the battle-field !

Both had become munis during their encounter with Ravan. If one carefully scrutinised Vali's past life with intellectual incisiveness one would discover that Vali's internal thoughts and contemplations were sublime and one would also discover the source from which this unexpected determination of his sprang.

Even from his childhood Vali had been a great devotee of Lord Jin. In fact, he had been a dedicated devotee of Lord Jin through countless *Janmas*. Through many *Janmas* he had been imbued with a spirit of renunciation and this was the reason for his determination to renounce worldly life.

Even the victory that a spiritually inclined man attains impels him to renounce the *Samsar* because the incisive intellect of a spiritually inclined man visualises the nature of defeat and disgrace even in the worldly prosperity and victory he attains. Such a man could not give any importance to victories, materialistic prosperity and happiness. They are all transitory in his eyes. A worldly victory can never be final nor can it ever be final because a victory in the *Samsar* is likely to be followed by a defeat. On the stage of life, all sorts of things are possible and everything in the *Samsar* is changeable and mutable.

A defeat is likely to be followed by a victory. A victory may be followed by a defeat.

In Vali's view, the magnificent victory he had achieved over Ravan was not lasting. It was transitory and changeable. Not only this; he could realise that behind such glorious victories there lay countless sorrows, untold agonies and indescribable tragedies. He realised that both defeat and victory were meaningless, mutable and transitory; so he decided to discard his attachment for the *Samsar*. In the pure fires of his spirit of renunciation, all the worldly desires and ambitions and aspirations were burnt to ashes.

This extraordinary event of Vali's renunciation after he attained the tremendous victory over Ravan contains a magnificent message for all mankind. It is an efficacious eye-opener to those who are steeped in the stupor of intellectual lethargy and spiritual lassitude.

Normally, we think that victory draws men towards attachments but from the event that took place in Vali's life, we can also realise that victory can attract a man towards renunciation also. When human beings are attracted towards attachments and infatuated by their victories they should realise that they may have to experience defeat and disgrace in the future. When victory draws a man towards renunciation, it must be realised that he will never experience defeat in his life and in the future he will be always victorious by virtue of his renunciation.

Vali renounced the *Samsar* on the battle-field; went to a great sage called Gaganachandra and received from him initiation into the *Sadhudharma*.

After being initiated into the *Sadhudharma*, he became deeply absorbed in spiritual austerities and activities which he carried out regularly in accordance with the principles of such a life. The great Muni Vali entered thus the trackless realms of the spirit. He undertook fresh and austere vows to discipline his senses and to discard certain kinds of food. He became chastened in the flames of spiritual austerities and performed such austerities as *Kayotsarg* in dreadful and desolate places like cemeteries, during days and nights.

Within a short while, the cuckoo of Vali's selflessness, detachment and spiritual elevation sat upon the branches of the tree of his attainments in the midst of the tender leaves of his spiritual excellence and began to sing songs of unexampled sweetness and melody. By virtue of his tremendous spiritual attainment he acquired an absolute mastery over all the superhuman powers present in the universe. In spite of his exceptional attainments, he did not become self-complacent; on the contrary, he continued to carry out his spiritual austerities

and endeavours, without the slightest slackness. He did not develop attachment for his mighty and miraculous powers, abilities and potentialities. Vali, the great Muni, during his wanderings happened to step into the valleys of the Ashtapad mountain; and once, an idea relating to his spiritual endeavours flashed in his mind like a lightning. A great sage by name Charan Muni was abiding there. Within the twinkling of an eye, Vali scaled the sky-high peaks of the mighty mountain. That mountain on which the first Tirthankar Bhagwan Rishabhdev had attained Nirvan brought holy memories of the twenty four Tirthankars. Emperor Bharat, who had been deeply grieved by the Nirvan of his father, sought and found spiritual solace by building there a number of Jin Temples. He tried to attain solace and to pacify the flames of anguish that had been consuming his heart, by installing in those temples magnificent idols whose radiance surpassed the splendour and lustre of extraordinary gems.

Mahamuni Vali was overwhelmed with joyful emotions; and worshipped the Jin idols with overflowing devotion; and then on the loftiest peak of that memorable and holy mountain he sat in deep meditation. There was no question of his taking food. The reason was he was performing *Masakshamans* (a monthly fasting). Speed.. great speed is essential to carry out spiritual endeavours.

One has to proceed speedily on the path of endeavours carrying out whatever one wants to carry out whether it is *Japa* (an austerity) *Tyag* (an austerity); acquiring knowledge, meditation; politeness or devotion. Speed is necessary in such endeavours; not the slow movement of a bullock-cart but the lightning-like flash of a rocket. If there was any break, it was only for rest; and even while taking rest one should bear in mind the vital point that the short break is meant for taking rest. It should not slide into spiritual slackness or lassitude. Periodical rest refreshes us and increases our speed by energising our spiritual potentialities; and we should take rest so that it may intensify our speed.

After Sugriv became the king of Kishkindha, he gave his sister, Shriprabha in marriage to Dashmukh Ravan. The marriage was celebrated with grandeur and *eclat*. In this manner, the tradition of cordiality and amity that had been in existence through generations between the Rakshasa dynasty and the Vanara dynasty again became firmly established. Sugriv happily accepted Dashmukh Ravan's overlordship. Everywhere, the atmosphere was peaceful and Ravan's pride was appeased. He returned to Lanka happy and fully satisfied. Sugriv made Chandrarashmi, heir-designate to the throne of Kishkindha so that he might assist him in the administration of the kingdom.

When Ravan saw any beautiful girl on his way to Lanka, he married her. If anyone opposed his wish, he abducted the girl and married her.

This is the strangeness of the efficacy of *Karma* and its irony. On one side a fragrant flower of virtues and on the other side a sharp thorn of blemishes and vices ! The rose has fragrance; but it also has thorns behind it. This is the wonderful game of nature. Even Ravan possessed the fragrance of such virtues as devotion for the Jin, magnanimity and heroism, and he also possessed the thorns of cruelty, heartlessness, arrogance, blinding passions, maddening sensual desires and other such vices, but on the whole his life was beautiful and fragrant like a flower because he was a prospective *Tirthankar*. In future, his soul was going to reach the status of a *Tirthankar*.

X

ON THE WAY TO THE CONQUEST OF THE WORLD

The sun had risen. The tender rays of the sun played on the trees and plants in a frolicsome manner and fascinated the beholders with their grace and beauty. The golden rays of the sun had rendered the whole world and the sky golden as if by some heavenly alchemy. At such a pleasant time, a *Pushpak Viman* was speeding through the sky towards the city of Nityalokanagar.

The rays of enthusiasm and infatuation kept dancing on the powerful face of Dashmukh Ravan. He was proceeding to Nityalokanagar with the purpose of marrying Ratnavali, an extraordinarily beautiful young lady who lived in that city. The *Pushpak Viman* was flying over the sky-high peaks of Ashtapad mountain and then all of a sudden the air-ship stopped with a sudden jolt. Ravan's eyebrows widened with surprise when he noticed that his air-ship which was proceeding at a tremendous speed had come to sudden halt. He felt annoyed and irritated. He roared with anger, "Who is that unlucky fellow who is courting death by stopping my air-ship?"

He landed the air-ship safely on a high peak of the mountain and looked around to see who was responsible for this. After he had carefully observed every nook and corner of the area, he noticed the Mahamuni Vali sitting on a peak in deep meditation and Ravan's anger flamed up. He said in an angry and rebuking voice :

“You are still hypocritical. What is the use of your hypocrisy? Even now, do you want to pursue me? Already in the battlefield using some magical trick you picked me up and threw me up into the sky and I felt greatly humiliated and dishonoured. You made me experience the worst possible disgrace and distress: and even now you are doing the same; but this time, I will not let you go alive. I will not rest until I have sent you to the abode of Yama. If you on that day threw me up into the sky along with my *Chandrahās* and performed circumambulations along the sea-coast, today I will lift you along with this mountain and throw you into the salt sea”.

This kind of madness is natural in a man who has a false notion of his importance and who is haughty and arrogant. The agitation that had been caused by the defeat that Vali had inflicted upon him had not yet abated; yet he was now trying to provoke Vali, the valiant. He was trying to incite Vali though all his thousand attainments had been futile against Vali's incomparable might. Yet believing in the efficacy of his powers, he was courting a new disaster.

He, at once, descended to the foot of Ashtapad mountain. He cut open the earth and penetrated into it; and then he recited the *Mantras* relating to his thousand miraculous achievements; and began to lift the mighty mountain.

When he was pulling up the mountain, the stones and rocks on the mountain began to tumble down. The peaks of the mountain began to crack and break and the deafening noise of the breaking peaks shook the whole sky. The terrific noise of the tumbling peaks began to reverberate at great distances.

The mighty sage Vali, by means of his extra-sensory perception (*Avadhijnan*) saw what Ravan was doing. His compassionate heart palpitated with pity.

“Oh! What an enormity the sinner is trying to perpetrate! What a tremendous destruction and violence he is causing impelled by animosity against me and he has dared to destroy the sublime *Thirtha* (holy place) which was constructed by

Bharatheshwar. In all probability, he will destroy all the holy places in the Ashtapad mountain". Vali thought about the evil action of Dashmukh Ravan and its unholy consequences.

"But how am I concerned with it ? I have no attachment for this world. I have discarded all my attachments for the materialistic world. When I have renounced even my attachment for my body why should I be concerned at what Ravan is trying to do ? What is the use of thinking about the consequences of his action ?"

And then the Mahamuni Vali became deeply absorbed in the *Ekatva-Bhavana* (the feeling that one is alone). He remained detached and assumed an attitude of absolute neutrality to the enormity that Ravan was about to perpetrate. But he could remain in that state of neutrality only for a few moments. Again he began thinking. "When it is a question of the welfare of all people and the happiness of all people; when the welfare, and happiness of people are endangered, it will not bring glory to an enlightened man if he cares for his own progress and elevation and ignores the sacred duty of thinking of the welfare and happiness of all people. How can I remain calm and detached when in my very presence, the holy temples and *Jivas* are being destroyed ? At such a time, the attitude of neutrality brings not welfare; but harm. Instead of being detached and neutral, I will make him taste such a fruit of his arrogance that he will remember it throughout his life".

The great Muni, Vali, who had mastered countless powers and miraculous accomplishments and who was a treasure-house of tremendous powers and potentialities, pressed the peak of the mountain with one toe of his. Suddenly, a miracle occurred. The Ashtapad mountain which was mounting into the air, sank down. Large rocks and boulders began to tumble down. The mighty trees that stood on the sides of the mountain became topsyturvy and fell on the ground with a deafening crash. Stones, pebbles and trash rose into the air as if thrown up by a mighty tempest. The entire sky was filled with them. The condition of Ravan who had cut open the earth and had gone in, was really pitiable.

He was in great distress. He became crushed between the mountain and the earth and was pressed into the earth; and when he was thus crushed down, he began screaming with pain, panc-stricken. He shouted aloud; and his loud cries shook every part of the mountain, its peaks, its surroundings, and the mighty trees and massive rocks. His pain and anguish were boundless.

Hence he came to be called *Ravan*.

When Ravan's cries of pain and distress fell on the ears of the Mahamuni Vali, he was moved to compassion. He lifted his toe. The Mahamuni Vali was an ocean of compassion and grace; and so he was not angry with Ravan. He had done it only to prevent the destruction of holy places and the death of *jivas*. He had done what he wanted to. Taking a step naturally to teach a lesson to somebody is entirely different from taking a step angrily to inflict a severe punishment. There is a world of difference between the two. A great man punishes an offender that too with the attitude of neutrality only after estimating his offences and only when it is absolutely unavoidable. But when the offence has been neutralized or removed, he liberates the offender and pardons him. Great men always are forgiving by nature. They know that forgiveness is nobler than revenge. But the common people of this world become infuriated when someone offends them. Their anger begins to flame out. They make an allout effort to punish the offender infuriated by his offence; but soon they realize their mistake and seek forgiveness. Under such circumstances the one who punishes an offender thinks only of one thing. "What I am doing is right; and if I inflict this punishment upon the offender, he will not dare repeat his offence. He will come round at once. He may now confess his blunder and seek forgiveness but he will not desist from his evil actions; he will, after sometime, repeat his offence. A dog's tail gets curved again. Moreover, even after punishing the offender, he will not keep quiet. He will continue to view every action of the offender with suspicion. His way of dealing with the offender and of estimating his offence, keeps changing.

The Mahamuni Vali again became absorbed in deep meditation; with an absolute unconcern regarding the world and its ways.

Ravan's condition was pitiable. It was a sight to see ! His face which had been resplendent had grown gloomy and dull. His heroic face which was reddish formerly had now become black and bleak with depression and despair. His proud and uplifted head was now bowed in disgrace. Soon after being released from the jaws of death, he ascended the Ashtapad mountain; and reached the peak on which Vali, the ocean of grace was in meditation. Feeling sorry for his blunder and full of repentance, he fell at the feet of Vali. His arrogance and his false sense of self-importance which were like Mount Meru melted in the heat of his repentance into tears and washed the holy feet of the Mahamuni who was the very embodiment of patience and nobility.

"My lord ! I am the meanest of the mean ! Shamelessly, I have been offending you again and again. But you who are a mighty hero and a man of enlightenment, became, a Maharshi by your spiritual endeavours and you have borne with my offences and have pardoned them". While he was saying this his voice became choked with emotion. The tears flowed from his eyes. His false sense of self-importance and arrogance melted away. Ravan, the King of Lanka; Ravan, the mighty hero and Ravan, the master of a thousand miraculous powers sat at the feet of Vali, the sage and confessed his past sins, blunders and offences and sought his forgiveness.

"Really, to day, I have realized that you renounced the fascinating and beautiful Kingdom of Kishkindha; that you discarded your incomparable wealth; you gave up your attachment for wealth, prosperity and royal grandeur; that you discarded your attachment for your kindred and friends not because you were weak or incapable but out of abounding compassion for me ! To-day, I have realized the disparity between you and me. What am I but a poor, petty, powerless, helpless and weak mortal ? What am I but an ignorant child, crying in the

night for the light, compared to you who are mighty and stolid like a mountain the very abode of grace and compassion, heroism and light? If you are like the eagle the King of birds, I am like a mean vulture. To-day, you have saved me from the dreadful jaws of all-devouring death whose night is dateless. I am wholeheartedly grateful to you for the grace you have bestowed upon me despite my foolish and thoughtless actions. Truly, you are venerable; and worthy of worship and adoration”.

Thus, Ravan saluted and glorified Vali, the Mahamuni; humbly entreated him to forgive his offences; and with overflowing devotion, he performed three circumambulations around Vali, the sage.

The Mahamuni had attained to a state of proximity to *Kaivalya* the supreme state. He was absolutely free from all attachments and hatred. By means of his superhuman austerities and his profound absorption in meditation he had attracted the attention of even the greatest gods in heaven.

Because he had saved holy places from being destroyed; because he had saved millions of *jivas* from being decimated; because he had risen completely above all attachments and hatred; because of the way in which he had dealt with Ravan teaching him a lesson and making him realize and repent his blunders; and because he had bestowed compassion on Ravan after he sought his refuge and because he had displayed extraordinary intellectual and emotional equanimity the gods and goddesses praised him heartily and showered flowers upon him, uttering cries of joy and jubilation. Vali, the valiant was now resplendent with tremendous spiritual splendour.

A vast tide rose in the heart of Ravan which was like an ocean of devotion; and so, again he placed his forehead on the feet of the great Muni and felt supremely blessed. Those who deem Ravan a demon i.e. a Rakshasa can visualize in the light of these various events of his life, the truth about his tremendous personality and can see that he was a man of exceptional magnanimity; that he was capable of lofty devotion and that he was a man of extraordinary patience and heroism both physical and

intellectual and can scrutinize his actions and his motives in the light of such events.

Soon, Ravan proceeded with his followers, relatives and friends to have a *Darshan* of the Jin Temples and images built by Bharath on that mountain. At the entrance to the temple, he discarded all his weapons such as *Chandrahast* and entered the temple; and there adored and glorified with his heart overflowing with devotion, all the twenty four Tirthankars from Bhagwan Rishabhdev upto Vardhaman Mahavir; and performed the eight kinds of worship.

Then, he was immersed deeply in worshipping the Lords with the emotion of devotion. He took up his *Veena* in his hands. The strings of the *Veena* began to produce sweet melodies as his fingers kept dancing on them. Ravan's queens began to sing melodiously to the accompaniment of the instruments on which they played. Their songs blended with the melodies of the *Veena*. It was a unique and extraordinary combination. Now, the waves of devotion in the form of sweet melodies filled the atmosphere of the Ashtapad mountain. The listeners were spell-bound.

The wheel of time moved softly and smoothly, unimpeded by anything. Ravan was trying to express his anguish and agony that lay in the depths of his heart, through the melodies of the *Veena*; and was trying to penetrate the heart of the Paramatma by means of those melodies. In Ravan's world, the Tirthankar Bhagawan occupied the highest position. He was deeply immersed in his meditation on the Paramatma. Ravan who forgot himself in a contemplation on the creation of the Paramatma was swaying in ecstasy absolutely free from all anxieties and worries; and was endeavouring to attain a greater and greater degree of proximity to the Paramatma.

Meanwhile, a heavenly being who happened to be sitting in a lonely corner of the temple, kept watching every action of Ravan's with fixed eyes. He was supremely pleased with the devotion of Ravan for the Paramatma.

The heavenly being was none other than *Dharmendra* himself.

He too had come there on a pilgrimage; but as he entered the temple, the melodious utterances and melodies of devotion fell on his ears; and spell-bound by the utterances and melodies he had slipped into a corner silently.

Soon after the worship was over, *Nagaraj Dharmendra* overwhelmed with joyful emotions said to Ravan :

"Oh you superhuman Ravan ! you have indeed, performed a miracle. Whatever is said in praise of your devotion for the *Arihant*, is little. Indeed, your devotional worship is extraordinary and exceptional ! Your devotion has captivated my heart. Oh ! How marvellous was your glorification of the Lord!"

"No. No. I do not deserve this praise. It is merely because of your kindness and grace that you have praised my devotion for the Lord. I was just endeavouring to captivate the compassionate heart of the *Paramatma*".

"Please do not say so. Surely, your devotion was sublime; and it will surely bring you *Moksha*. I am fully satisfied with your devotion. Ask for any boon; and I will give it to you. If you desire any boon; if you have any aspiration, you can mention it. I am ready to grant any wish of yours". *Dharmendra* said, placing his hand gently on Ravan's back.

"Oh you revered *Nagendra* ! It is quite natural and proper that you should be pleased with the devotion shown to the *Paramatma* who is the Lord of the three worlds. A devotee experiences delight by adoring and glorifying his Lord. Oh you serpent-king ! You are pleased with my devotion for the Lord and you are desirous of granting me a boon. This only shows your devotion for the Lord; and it is also proper that you should be so pleased. If I ask for any boon it will be a reproach on my devotion for the Lord."

Dharmendra was greatly amazed at Ravan's nobility and was happy to see that Ravan was free from desires. The great

god embraced him; and said: "You deserve the highest commendation for being above desires. I am supremely happy to see that you are a noble man. I bow my head to your exalted mind which is free from desires. I heartily commend you and as a token of our meeting today, I bestow upon you the miraculous power called *Amoghvijsaya* by means of which you can assume many forms".

And after bestowing that power on Ravan, Dharmendra went away to *Nagalok*, the Kingdom of cobras.

What an extraordinary and resplendent spiritual power this is of Ravan who showed selfless devotion to the Paramatma! How deeply was this idea inscribed on his heart that the devotion for the Paramatma is not an article to be sold in the markets of the world! He deemed the devotion for the Paramatma superior to the value of all the precious possessions in this world. He deemed it the most precious thing in the world. He never thought of attaining any worldly power, progress or prosperity by means of his devotion for the Paramatma. Is this a small thing in Ravan's extraordinary greatness and nobility ?

Ravan was decorated with the divine power called *Amoghvijsaya*; while Vali was decorated with the supreme jewel of *Kaivalya*. How could the heavenly beings remain silent when the Mahamuni had attained *Kevaljnan* ? At once, countless gods and goddesses descended upon Ashtapad mountain enthusiastically. They planned to celebrate Vali's attainment of *Kevaljnan*; and it was carried out in a grand manner. The Mahamuni who had attained *Kevaljnan* delivered a discourse on the occasion and then he went away from there.

Ravan sat in his *Pushpak Viman* and set off to Nityaloknagar. His marriage with Ratnavali took place there as decided upon earlier. Everywhere waves of joy and jubilation rose and rolled. Priyadarshi, the father of Ratnavali was overwhelmed with joy because his beloved daughter had secured the hand of such a great man as Ravan. The marriage of Ratnavali and Ravan

took place with all *eclat* and grandeur. After the marriage, on an auspicious day, Ravan returned to Lanka with Ratnavali.

The night was still in the initial phase. Lines of radiant lights had begun to illuminate the roads, high mansions, the magnificent palace, the decorated dancing halls, the streets and squares of the city of Lanka. Sorrows, worries, desperations and despondencies were totally absent in Lanka. All were happy and peaceful. The whole atmosphere was filled with happiness, joy, pleasure, peace and satisfaction. Any beautiful young lady would feel that her beauty was nothing compared to the grandeur of Lanka.

Ravan, the King of Lanka sat in a serene mood on a throne in the top-most storey of his palace. His lustrous eyes kept watching the stars in the sky and were lost in exploring the mysteries hidden behind the spangled firmament. He was deeply absorbed in his contemplations. Every line on his face revealed that he was intent upon achieving some great ambition; and that he was visualizing the attainments that he would make in the future.

Absent-mindedly, he got up from his throne. He began walking to and fro, in the chamber; and again, he sat on the throne. He looked around; and clapped his hands.

The door-keeper entered saying, "Victory to the King".

"Call Kumbhakarna and Vibhishan".

The door-keeper bowed his head and retreated at once. Within a short while the two brothers came in. Seeing them, Ravan got up; and came forward a few paces and embraced them affectionately.

"Dear brother! Why did you send for us at this time of the night?" Vibhishan asked Ravan looking towards him eagerly.

"I feel immensely happy when I see you both. At once, the spring of happiness surges out of my heart".

"What are you thinking of, dear brother ? I think you have been plunged in some deep thoughts", said Kumbhakarna, with the brilliance of a prophet.

"Kumbhakarna ! you have spoken the truth".

"Yes, my dear brother ! I have learnt a little of astrology".

"And so you can make predictions ; am I right ?" Ravan said completing what Kumbhakarna was saying and the three brothers, at once, burst into a fit of laughter. The serious atmosphere became shaken by their laughter.

The moon was rising slowly from the east. The sky was calm and the air was pleasant.

"Dear brother ! Again and again, a certain thought has been appearing in my mind" Ravan said, taking Kumbhakarna's hand in his hand.

"What thought is it ?"

"You tell me. You are an astrologer".

"Shall I say what you are thinking of ?"

"Surely !"

"But on one condition".

"Well ! What is it ?"

"Assure me that you will not laugh at me when I say it".

"Agreed !"

"But who will stand surety for you".

"Vibhishan".

"Then shall I speak out ?"

"Hurry up".

Kumbhakarna closed his eyes like an astrologer and muttered something to himself. He made some calculations touching his fingers with his thumb and touching his toes. It

was as if some great sage was sitting in meditation. Then, a few moments later, he opened his eyes and said.

"I think you are planning to wage a war against somebody".

"You have spoken the truth", Ravan said. He paused a little and said seriously.

"Dear brother ! I am wondering why we should not set off to conquer the whole world. What is your opinion.?"

"What pleases our brother pleases us also. Why should you ask for our opinion ?" said Vibhishan in a polite voice.

"In that case, from today onwards we have to make preparations for our campaign".

"You give the commands; and we will carry them out".

"In that case, we have to consult the court-priest which day is auspicious for our setting out. You two meet him and fix up an auspicious day".

Vibhishan looked towards Kumbhakarna in a slightly ironical manner and said genially : "Brother ! You too make this mistake ! A great astrologer is sitting here. Why should you send us to the court-priest ?"

Even before Vibhishan could complete his sentence Kumbhakarna pressed his hand in a violent manner. He screamed with pain.

"You rogue ! Are you making fun of me ?"

"Oh ! I am dead. Please release my hand. I will never make fun of you", and Vibhishan released himself from the terrible grasp of Kumbhakarna and ran away. Kumbhakarna ran behind him chasing him. Both went running to the house of the court-priest. It was late in the night. Nothing could be seen in the night. Nothing could be seen in the darkness of the night. Silence and stillness prevailed everywhere. At such a time, the two brothers began knocking on the door of the court-priest's house.

"Who is it ?" A voice asked from within.

On hearing the voice of the court-priest, Kumbhakarna's anger shot up. He was going to say something in raging anger but Vibhishan silenced him by making a sign with his hand and then said aloud :

"We are the princes, Kumbhakarna and Vibhishan. Please open the door". On hearing the voice of Vibhishan, the court-priest felt that the floor beneath his feet was sinking. He was greatly stupefied. "What can be the trouble ?" The court-priest muttering to himself opened the door. He said in a polite manner, "Dear Lords ! What may be the cause for your coming at such a time of the night ?"

"Yes, dear sir ! We had to come here on account of an urgent matter. You must consult the *Alamanac* and fix up an auspicious day".

"Now ? This very moment ?"

"Yes, this very moment you have to fix up a day".

"But what for ?"

"Can't you guess the reason when we have come to you at this time of the night" Kumkhakarna's words flowed out like a cataract.

"Is it for setting out for making a war ?"

"Yes you are right. We need an auspicious day for the travel".

"Very well ! I will come to the court tomorrow morning after fixing up an auspicious time".

"All right. Come tomorrow and tell us," saying this the two princes returned to their palaces thinking of the plans and arrangements they had to make. Lost in those thoughts, they slept.

The very next day soon after sunrise Ravan the King of Lanka began issuing orders to the commanders and warriors

and was engaged in making the preparations for the conquest of the world. The Kings, princes and the Vidyadhar heroes of the surrounding areas gathered in Lanka. All unanimously decided to launch their first campaign under the leadership of the mighty hero against Indra, the King of Ratanupur.

The auspicious day approached. The Rakshasa army was bubbling with enthusiasm and zeal. At the fixed time, Ravan began his march of Victory accompanied by Kumbhakarna, Vibhishan, Indrajit, Megavahan and other mighty warriors and soldiers. Sugriv, the King of Kishkindha also joined Ravan with his army. Khar, the Vidyadhar King of Pathal Lanka arrived with his fourteen thousand chosen Vidyadhar warriors.

At the appointed time, in the midst of the holy *mantras* being recited by the court-priest Ravan set off on his march of victory to conquer the world.

XI

ON THE BANKS OF REWA...

Ravan travelled through the sky with the purpose of launching an attack on the Vidyadhar dynasties that ruled over the Vaithadhya mountain. He also wanted to conquer the unconquered kingdoms on the way and he handed over that responsibility to such heroes as Indrajit and Meghavahan. It was a children's game for them. Kumbhakarna, Vibhishan, Sugriv and such heroes were not necessary for it.

The march of victory continued, day by day. The victorious army was proceeding crossing place after place like some intoxicated elephants. He himself could not realize how he was spending time during the march contemplating on the beauties of nature with delight and elation. One day, while flying over the Vindhya mountains, he saw in a beautiful area, a stream strutting and sliding down from the sky-high peaks of the mountains, with a melodious noise. He found out from his secret guards that the river was the famous *Rewa*; and was greatly revered by people. It was a fascinating area abounding in magnificent forests and sky-high peaks. The water was deep and unfathomable in the river which was flowing at a great speed; and whose waves went leaping and jumping. There were countless peacocks dancing about on the high banks of the river. The whole atmosphere was filled with the melodies of birds. The entire area looked fascinating with green plants and trees.

Ravan's heart was greatly delighted. Waves of joy arose in his heart. He thought for a while; and then decided to camp there for sometime. Accordingly, Sugriv and the other trusted

Vanara warriors made arrangements for camping there; and within the twinkling of an eye, the vast Rakshasa army gathered on the magnificent banks of the Rewa. The surrounding areas were filled with the noises of the commotion of thousands of horses, soldiers and others.

Ravan's tent was pitched on the bank of the river, in the midst of fascinating surroundings. Smaller tents were put up for Kumbhakarna, Vibhishan, Sugriv, Meghavahan and Indrajit at various distances.

Ravan had not yet completed his worship of the *Jin*. He used to take his food only after worshipping the *Jin*, as a daily and regular ritual, whether he was in the city or in a forest; whether he was on a pilgrimage or on a military campaign. He never broke his principle of worshipping the Lord before taking his food. For this reason, wherever he went, he used to carry the *Jin* idol with him. Even while going to make a war, he did not forget to carry with him a *Jin* image studded with gems. After completing his daily activities such as taking a bath he wore beautiful white dress. He got a spot beneath a tree washed with holy and scented water; placed the image on a small golden throne; and began worshipping it.

He performed *Abhishek* to the image with the pure and pellucid water of the *Rewa*. He decorated the image with beautiful and fragrant lotuses and other flowers. He sat absorbed in devotion and meditation forgetting himself fully; and he was absorbed in carrying out the lofty worship. Suddenly, floods appeared in the river *Rewa*. The calm and cool water of the river began jumping and leaping. Waves began to rise and fall. Suddenly, mighty waves rushed with a Satanic force to devour the banks of the river. When those waves crashed against the high, solid banks, they began to collapse and fall down. Huge trees fell into the river with a deafening noise, and began floating on the floods of the river. The entire bank of the river was covered with water. All the creatures in the water such as crocodiles and fishes began whirling in the midst of the waves.

Suddenly, dirty floods began to flow towards Ravan. Not only this, even the image was not safe from the dirty water but that dirty water completely covered the image. Ravan's worship was thus interrupted. Ravan who had been sitting there in a serene mood, began to rage with anger. He became furious. Ravan was greatly offended by the interruption. He roared like a ferocious lion :

"Who is that wicked fellow ? Who is courting death by thus disturbing my worship ?

Seeing the havoc that had been done by the waves of the river and hearing Ravan's ferocious shouts of anger, Vibhishan, Kumbhakarna and the other Rakshasa heroes rushed out of their tents and came running to Ravan. All of them stood near Ravan, "Who is that wicked King ? Who is that sinful Vidhyadhar or demon that has been causing this disturbance ?"

Stillness reigned everywhere. There was pin-drop silence and the atmosphere appeared to be pervaded with fear. All felt helpless and were unable to think of doing anything. Just then, a Vidyadhar warrior, summoning a little courage said,

"My lord ! At a short distance from here, there is a city called Mahishmati. Sahasrakiran is the King of that city. True to his name, he is a man of countless virtues besides being a mighty hero. He is worshipped by thousands of Kings and princes. At present, in the city of Mahishmati, a festival of water-sports is going on. In order to facilitate the water sports, King Sahasrakiran has constructed a dam across the *Rewa*. He is playing water-sports with his thousands of queens. Vast armies are standing on the banks safeguarding the king. When they are playing water-sports, if floods come, the gates of the dam are opened. Oh lord, these floods have been caused by it; and the water rendered dirty by their sports has been flowing here on account of which your worship has been disturbed. If you observe a little closely, you can see clearly on the banks of the *Rewa* the flowers and other decorations that have fallen off the bodies of Sahashrakiran's queens".

What the Vidyadhar warrior had said was absolutely true. The pure and pellucid water of the Rewa had been polluted by the dirt of human bodies and there lay on the banks the faded flowers that had fallen off the heads of the queens. Ravan was greatly infuriated by what the warrior had said. It was like adding fuel to fire.

“Ah ! How insolent of Sahasrakiran ! His sports have polluted the water and have disturbed the worship of the *Jim*. He must be properly punished. Who is there ? . . . Go and bring him here binding him hand and foot. I will teach him a lesson and destroy his arrogance”.

As soon as Ravan gave this command, thousands of Rakshasa warriors rushed towards the banks of the Rewa.

Within a few moments the fascinating banks of the Rewa became a battle-field. A terrible war broke out between the Rakshasa army and the army of Sahasrakiran. The Rakshasa warriors began to rain sharp arrows on the soldiers of Sahasrakiran. By virtue of their miraculous accomplishments, they confounded the hostile army. When Sahasrakiran who was absorbed in water-sports noticed his soldiers being killed like insects, he got ready for a war. He took up his bow and arrows. He pulled the string of his bow and released arrows in such a way that the heroism of the Rakshasa warriors faded out like the stars that are covered by the radiance of the sun; and a large number of Rakshasa soldiers fell victims to his dreadful arrows.

Sahasrakiran's heroism was incomparable and unique. His strength as a warrior was invincible and infallible. His arrows flashed like flames of fire and rained fire on the Rakshasa warriors. Hearing the cries : “Save me ! Save me !” and seeing his soldiers running helter-skelter, Ravan himself got ready for the war! and entered the battle-field. Without a moment's delay, with flaming anger, he shot arrows at Sahasrakiran. But Sahasrakiran was not an ordinary warrior. He fought more ferociously than Ravan. He released sharp arrows and humbled Ravan. Ravan stopped shooting arrows and took up his mace, Sahasrakiran also took up his mace. Ravan began to pant for

breath. His pride was offended; and he felt humbled. Even in fighting with a mace, Sahasrakiran was an expert; and he humbled Ravan in this fight also and knocked the smoke out of his head. Thus, taking up weapon after weapon, both fought ferociously, but Ravan could not defeat him; on the contrary, every endeavour of his failed. Ravan was greatly amazed at Sahasrakiran's heroism and abilities. He was stupefied. He thought that in this kind of fighting, he could not attain success even if he fought for a thousand lives. Therefore, he decided to use his miraculous powers and weapons and to bring the war to an end.

When Ravan began to use his supernatural weapons, Sahasrakiran became powerless. He felt absolutely helpless; and was defeated. Though Ravan had defeated him, he did not feel elated by his success. His dignified face, even after he had defeated Sahasrakiran was not radiant with the exultation of success; but was gloomy and depressed. Again and again, his heart echoed with these words, "This is not my victory. It is Sahasrakiran's. I am not victorious. Sahasrakiran is victorious".

Proceeding forwards a little, he embraced Sahasrakiran. His voice resounded in the battle-field which was still and silent. "Oh you hero! Actually, this is a victory to you. You have attained a victory. I am greatly fascinated by your extraordinary heroism and abilities. My pride fell to pieces when I saw your tremendous might and abilities. You will be a friend of mine; not an enemy."

Ravan took Sahasrakiran with honour into his tent; and made him sit by him on his throne. In the presence of all the heroes and warriors, he whole-heartedly praised Sahasrakiran's heroism and abilities; and the pellucid waters of amity that sprang from his heart overwhelmed Sahasrakiran.

How lofty was Ravan's eye for virtues ?

How adorable were his actions and propensities !

Absorbed in a heartfelt admiration of Sahasrakiran's heroism and abilities, Ravan forgot his offence. Not only that;

adopting an attitude of absolute amity and affection, he gave Sahasrakiran a place worthy of his heroism and abilities.

Once, while Ravan was holding his court, and was absorbed in attending to administrative affairs, all of sudden, a great sage who was travelling through the sky entered his court.

With overflowing enthusiasm and joy, he rose from his throne and stood up to honour the sage. At once, he discarded his sandals studded with gems; bowed his head and went forward to receive the sage. Saluting him with devotion, he reverently touched his feet. He felt greatly delighted by the arrival of the sage. He was overwhelmed with joyful emotions when he found that he was actually a *Ganadhar Bhagwan*.

Showing a *Kashtasan*, a wooden seat to the *Ganadhar*, making him sit on it, he sat by him on the ground.

A Mahamuni is the very image of benevolence and wishes for the welfare of all beings in the universe. His serene face was resplendent with the feelings of benevolence and compassion; and he was totally detached from all worldly prosperity, progress and pleasures. He had no attachment at all for them. His face was radiant with the light of true knowledge. He was the very embodiment of self-discipline and spiritual excellence; and he wished for the happiness and welfare of all.

Uttering the expression, "*Dharmalabh*" (may you attain spiritual prosperity) he bestowed his blessings upon Ravan.

The holy expression, *Dharmalabh* is the mother of spiritual prosperity and the spring of supreme felicity. He, who attains this blessing of *Dharmalabh*, attains the inexhaustible treasure-house of spiritual elevation. He who has with him this wealth of *Dharmalabh* easily crosses the ocean of *Samsar*. All his agitations, worries, calamities and adversities disappear in a moment. He who attains this blessing, naturally becomes the lord of all prosperity and felicity.

Ravan was silent for a while; and then, with devotion and politeness, he said, "Oh Lord! I feel supremely happy to see

you. Your arrival has hallowed my court. May I know the purpose of your visit ? Oh Lord, kindly tell me how I may serve you”.

The Mahamuni replied in a serious and dignified tone;

“Oh King ! I was formerly the King of Mahishmati. My name was Shatabahu. I realized the futility of *Samsar*. I became aware of the cycle of birth and death; and I renounced it. I realized the necessity of renouncing the *Samsar*. The *Samsar*, I felt abounded in anguish rather than felicity. Naturally, I became detached from the *Samsar*. Self-sacrifice and detachment took the place of attachment and selfishness. The royal throne became a bed of thorns and all the delicious drinks and food appeared to be as harmful as poison. I began to feel that beautiful young ladies were poisonous snakes; and that friends and relatives seemed to be foes. In consequence, I renounced life; received initiation into the *Charitradharma* after handing over the Kingdom to Prince Sahasrakiran.

“Then, is Sahasrakiran, the heroic warrior your son ?” Ravan asked, speaking in the middle, with overflowing eagerness.

“Yes. Sahasrakiran is my son”

“Gurudev ! I set off from Lanka to conquer the world. The beautiful scenery of Mahishmati greatly fascinated me; and so I got my tents pitched here. When I was carrying out the worship of the Paramatma on the bank of the Rewa, the water polluted by the water-sports of Sahasrakiran flowed over the area and rendered the whole place unholy. On account of it, my worship of the Paramatma was disturbed. Then enraged by it, I fought against Sahasrakiran and captured him.

Later, I understood that what had happened was not intentional and that it had been done unknowingly; and a noble hero like Sahasrakiran would not have committed such a mistake knowingly. Would your noble son dishonour and displease the Paramatma ? Not at all.”

Having said this, Ravan went into the inner chamber; and brought with him Sahasrakiran. Sahasrakiran feeling ashamed

of his action, with overflowing politeness, saluted the feet of his father who was a great Muni. The Muni saw him with fixed eyes; and blessed him saying, "*Dharmalabh*".

Dashmukh Ravan was overwhelmed with joyful emotions. He saw at once, the Mahamuni and his son Sahasrakiran, a mighty hero. Tears of joy streamed from his eyes. Taking Sahasrakiran's hand in his, he said with an intense emotion;

"Oh valiant hero! From today onwards, you will be like a brother of mine and an honoured ally and friend. I honour the Mahamuni as my father. I am now experiencing such a great delight that it cannot be described. Kindly return home. Mahishmati will be yours for ever. Moreover, you kindly accept from your elder brother some land as a gift. Till now we were three brothers; but henceforth, we shall be four brothers".

But these words were not heard by Sahasrakiran. His mind ranging beyond the barriers of the past and the present was piercing the horizons with scorn for mean aims and in thoughts sublime that pierced the bounds of the perceptible universe. He seemed to have been becalmed on the sea of thought while still the land it sought remained unreached and unrealized. Caught in the confounding coils of materialistic existence, he began to search for the ultimate and the supreme meaning of existence. He was searching for a path that would lead him to supreme spiritual felicity.

There appeared on his face an expression of lofty seriousness,

"Brother! I have lost interest in everything".

Ravan was rather agitated by the words of Sahasrakiran.

"Yes, Ravan! I have lost my attachment even for my body".

"Dear brother, Sahasrakiran! What do you mean?"

"Dear brother! What is the use of giving way to despair? I have decided to follow the foot-steps of my noble father. Till now I have enjoyed countless pleasures. Now, I will renounce

the *Samsar*. I will dedicate my life to the holy feet of the great Muni and receive initiation into the *Samyamdharm*”.

Ravan's face became gloomy. Stillness and silence reigned supreme in the royal court. This decision of Sahasrakiran's filled all the Rakshasa heroes with agitation, amazement and gloom. Everyone was greatly impressed with Sahasrakiran's lofty personality. Everyone was fascinated by Sahasrakiran's invincible heroism and valour. They wondered whether Sahasrakiran would really renounce life. Would he really discard the pleasures of life? Would he really become absorbed in the life of a sadhu?

The water in the river Rewa ceased flowing and stood still. The floods that had been flowing a little while ago became transmuted into the tide of Sahasrakiran's determination. Birds stopped singing. All movements in nature came to a stand-still.

“Ravan! Do not give way to grief. I have been able to realize and visualize the truth. This is the only way to attain salvation and liberation. This is the only way by which the soul that is caught in the cage of the body can attain liberation and elevation”. Sahasrakiran said in a lofty voice.

Ravan's eyes streamed with tears. The earth was covered with his tears. His firmness gave way to grief. Looking into the blank sky, he was trying to find out the secret of the impulse that impelled Sahasrakiran to renounce the *Samsar*. He was lost in deep thoughtfulness. Again and again waves of thought rose in his mind. “What is Sahasrakiran doing? How deeply would it grieve his one thousand wives, his relatives and friends; and the people of Mahishmati to hear that Sahasrakiran has renounced the *Samsar*? It will cause great anguish to them. They will be plunged in the ocean of sorrow”. Ravan while thinking thus came back to the actual world. Sahasrakiran placed his hand on his shoulder. Their eyes met. Ravan embraced him and bathed him in his tears.

Sahasrakiran was silent for a while. Then he placed the hand of his young son in the hands of Ravan: and at once, he

surrendered himself at the feet of his father who was a great Muni. He renounced the *Samsar* and received initiation into the Sadhudharma.

All the people of Mahishmati had gathered on the banks of the Rewa. The dry banks of the river became wet with the tears shed by them. The atmosphere was filled with the grief-stricken cries and lamentations of thousands of ladies, relatives, friends and subjects.

Suddenly Sahasrakiran, the Rajarshi remembered something.

He called a messenger near him and said in a low, soft tone, "At once, you set off to Ayodhya and convey to Anaranya the king of Ayodhya, the news of my renunciation".

A secret lay behind the message sent by Sahasrakiran.

Anaranya, the king of Ayodhya and Sahasrakiran were bosom-friends. The two friends had once made this decision. "We two shall together renounce the *Samsar*. If one of us decides upon becoming a sadhu, he should intimate the other and then we two shall together renounce the *Samsar*". Sahasrakiran sent the message for this reason.

Accordingly, the messenger travelled to Ayodhya with the speed of wind; and appeared before the king of Ayodhya :

Seeing a stranger standing before him with folded hands, Anaranya asked him eagerly : "What may be the purpose of your visit? May I know who you are and whence you have come? Who sent you ? What message have you brought ?"

"Your Excellency ! I have come from a far-off place; I have come from Mahishmati which stands on the banks of the Rewa. Sahasrakiran, the mighty hero has sent an important message to you".

As soon as hearing the name of Sahasrakiran, King Anaranya rose from his royal throne; and stood up. Placing his hand upon the shoulder of the messenger, he said in a cordial manner :

"I hope King Sahasrakiran is hale and hearty. It is a long time since I met him. But I can never forget him even for a moment. What message has he sent me ? Please tell me".

When the messenger remembered Sahasrakiran who was now a Rajarshi, suddenly, the tears flowed from his eyes. King Anaranya's eagerness became acute. There fell a damp on his cheerfulness. He impatiently asked the messenger. "I think all are well at Mahashmati ?"

The messenger somehow controlling his grief said with great difficulty.

"What shall I say ? My lord, your dear friend, Sahasrakiran received initiation into the *Sadhudharma*".

"What did you say ? Has our dear friend become a *Sadhu*?"

Suddenly, he became serious. All in the court were silent. Everywhere sorrow and agitation appeared. Anaranya remembered the past events which he had forgotten through a lapse of time. He was immersed in profound thoughtfulness.

At once, he remembered his determination, to take to the life of a sadhu along with Sahasrakiran.

What else remained ? Without delaying even for a moment, he got ready to adopt the path of *Sadhudharma*; and to act according to his word. Accordingly, he handed over the responsibility of ruling over the country of Ayodhya to Prince Dashrath; and took to the *Samyamdharm*.

Ravan bowed with veneration to the Munis, Shatabahu and Sahasrakiran. He placed Sahasrakiran's son on the throne of Mahishmati; and set off on his march of victory through the sky.



XII

MEETING NARAD

"Dear brother, Hear me a little. Why have these animals collected here?"

"You seem to be alien to this place; otherwise, you would not have asked this question. Here a great *Yajna* (sacrifice) is going on".

"But why are these cattle brought here?"

"You are, indeed, ignorant. They are sacrificed at the *Yajna*. You are unable to understand even this simple fact".

"Oh ! Really?"

"Yes".

With his head covered with knotty and plait-like hair; carrying a *Veena* in his hands; wearing *Padukas* (sandals) and with his uppercloth hanging down his shoulders, Narad, the divine sage, traversing through the sky, on land, on water, arrived in the city of Rajpur. Narad was a star in the eyes of gods and goddesses and a garland of their hearts. He could move about anywhere without let or hindrance. So, he went straight to the palace. But when he saw the decorations and jubilations there, his astonishment knew no bounds. The magnificent and richly and colourfully decorated pavilion outside the palace and the sweet music of the band fascinated him. But he noticed there thousands of animals and he had a premonition of an impending evil. There seemed to be something fishy; and on

realizing it his heart began to palpitate. Moreover, a large number of kings and princes were going into the palace; and coming out. He could hear hymns being recited somewhere. He felt that he could not walk further. He stopped there; called to his side a young boy who had a calm and pleasant face, by means of a wave of his hand. He began to converse with the boy. He heard from the boy that really the animals were meant to be sacrificed and his heart was greatly agitated. The boy flitted away on seeing that the divine sage was angry and agitated.

Narad's tender heart was lacerated. Seeing the violence that was being committed under the name of *Dharma*, he was plunged in the ocean of grief. That was absolutely unjust and an act of dissimulation. He shook with compassion for the dumb animals and decided to stop the killing of animals; and he began planning out his course of action.

"Oh ! Dear sir !"

"Why ? What do you want ?"

"But, you please wait a little".

"Why are you speaking thus in a pointless manner ? Come on. Say what you want to say".

Narad tried, in vain, to stop him who was going towards the pavilion. He had a pot-belly; his legs were sturdy like pillars and he was ugly to look at. Narad wanted to speak to him; but he went away angrily towards the pavilion, in the twinkling of an eye.

Narad made a decision; and went towards the pavilion where the *Sacrifice* was going on. He thought that the *Yajna* was being performed by a king who was the root-cause of all that violence that was going to be committed. He had taken a decision, on his own to carry out the *Yajna*; and he had not been advised to do so by anyone.

Narad hurriedly approached the king and said to him :

“Oh king ! what is this improper thing you are doing ? How violent it is to kill animals !” Narad said this looking at the king with fixed eyes.

“Oh divine sage ! Don’t you know this ? This is a supreme *Yajna* which is considered to be very auspicious. How can there be any impropriety or calamity in this ?” King Maruth said this, glancing at Narad with indifference.

“But why are animals necessary for a *Yajna* ?”

“Cattle have to be sacrificed to propitiate the gods presiding over the *Yajna* and in whose honour the *Yajna* is being performed”.

“Oh you sinner ! If this is not improper what else is ? It is not merely an act of impropriety but also a dreadful sin to kill dumb animals”. Narad said this angered by the King’s attitude of indifference.

“But why are you agitated over this ? The animals that are sacrificed to the gods reach heaven and the gods also will be pleased and propitiated.”

“Who gave this absurd advice ? How can animals attain heaven when they are sacrificed at a *Yajna* ? If that is so, why don’t you offer yourself as a sacrifice and propitiate the gods ? Don’t you desire to go to heaven ?”

Hearing the angry words of Narad, those who were there, shivered with fear. They felt that the ground beneath their feet was slipping away.

Noticing that Narad was opposed to the *Yajna*, the king asked him : “Is it not *Dharma* to perform a sacrifice ?”

“No. It is not. It is sheer madness. If you really want to perform a *Yajna*, carry out a *Yajna* without committing violence”.

“How can that be ?”

“Treat your body itself as the altar of the *Yajna*. Treat your Soul as the one performing the sacrifice. *Tapascharya* or austerity is the holy fire. Knowledge is the ghee. Your *Karmas* are the samiths or fuel. Anger, avarice, pride etc. are the animals to be killed and destroyed in this *Yajna*. Truth is the *Stupa* in this *Yajna*. Giving protection to all *Jivas* is the *Dakshina* or the money-offering. Knowledge (*Jnan*); faith (*Darshan*) and character (*Charitra*) are the three small altars for the *Yajna*”.

“Oh king ! The *Vedas* say that a *Yajna* should be carried out in such a way that it can destroy your *Karmas*; but not in this manner, in which you are carrying it out. Those, who, like cruel monsters, commit violence at a *Yajna* have to go to hell after their death, Oh king ! You are intelligent and powerful. You have taken birth in a noble family. This kind of cruelty to animals will not bring you glory”.

Even before Narad had completed saying this a rain of blows fell upon him from all sides.

Narad went away from the Pavilion; rose to the sky; and went away traversing through the sky. Just at that time, Ravan's vast caravan was moving through the sky. He saw Ravan's *Pushpak Viman* speeding through the sky; and stood near it. He was panting for breath. On account of fear, his radiant face had grown black and dull. His words : “Give protection ! Give protection !” echoed in the sky. Noticing the divine sage, in this condition, Ravan ordered his men to stop the *Pushpak*. He alighted from the divine air-ship; and folding his hands, he said humbly;

“Oh divine sage ! What's the matter ?”

“Oh king of Lanka. A serious outrage is going on”.

“Who is doing it ? and why ?”

Narad narrated the entire story from the beginning to the end of the *Yajna* of King Maruth. Hearing it from the divine sage, Ravan began to rage with anger. At once, he landed his

air-ship in the garden near Rajpur. Hearing the news of Ravan's arrival, King Maruth came to the garden. He saluted Ravan; and received him with due honour. But Ravan was not pleased. How could he be? On one hand he was carrying out a *Yajna* contrary to his doctrines; and on the other, he was receiving him with honour to please him. No one would be pleased with such a man. In order to please anyone one must act according to his principles.

"And Maruth. What enterprise have you undertaken? What do you want to achieve by this *Yajna* involving violence? Please understand it well. Just as you love your life, other innocent creatures also love their life. Can you attain heavenly state of existence by this kind of heartless violence? Even if heaven can be attained by this method, fie upon it! Such a heaven is certainly contemptible. The Paramatma has expounded the *Dharma* of non-violence. But you are ruining yourself in this world and in the other world by committing this terrible violence. Whether you attain heaven or not; here in this world, you get ready to suffer hellish torment in my prison".

The words of Ravan, the King of Lanka which were the words of the supreme commander were not to be broken or disobeyed. Anyone who opposed Ravan had to be ready to be cast into the jaws of death. On hearing about the arrival of Ravan the others were greatly frightened. They were stunned and stupefied. Poor fellows! They ran away quietly from the sacrificial pavilion. They went away so quietly that nobody noticed them. A commotion arose everywhere in this confusion. Seeing people running away, Kumbhakarna and Vibhishan entered the pavilion. Seeing them running away from there, they challenged them, saying :

"Stop there! Where are you running away? Stay awhile. We will make a sacrifice of you at the altar of the *Yajna*. Are you killing these dumb animals! You mad monsters? Stay awhile!"

At the same time, they lifted some and threw them away; and grasped some by their necks and cast them away. Indrajit

and Meghavahan untied the animals from the pegs and released them; and they too came towards the pavilion.

“Dear brother, the sacrificial fire is burning still. Push them here, we will send them to heaven directly”.

Total ruination ! There was time for somebody to instigate him. Kumbhakarna seized a few people and threw them up into the air. There was a commotion everywhere. All were in mortal dread. Their lives were in danger. Out of fear they were trying to run away; but king Maruth came there suddenly and ordered that the *Yajna* should be given up. He also entreated Kumbhakarna not to kill the people.

“Oh lord ! Forgive me. In future, I will not encourage this kind of rituals even by a mistake. Oh graceful lord ! Kindly pardon us”. They entreated him to save their lives.

Kumbhakarna was moved to compassion. He released them from his clutches. Soon, the atmosphere in the palace of King Maruth was pervaded with joy and jubilation. In the place where earlier, the hectic activities were going on the whole area was now teeming with his men like waves rolling in a lake.

After taking a bath they worshipped the Paramatma; had their food and then gathered in the court. Narad also was present.

“Divine sage ? Again and again various kinds of doubts have been rising in my mind. If these are cleared...” Ravan said breaking the ice in the royal court.

“Certainly your doubts can be cleared”. The divine sage. Narad said fixing his eyes on Ravan.

“Divine sage ! When did this practice of killing animals at *Yajnas* begin ?”

“Oh you King of Lanka ! Your question is relevant to the occasion. There is a thrilling story behind it.”

“Won't you tell us what it is !” Vibhishan said.

“Why not ? Surely. I will tell you, listen !”

“Once there was a magnificent city by name Shuktimati on the banks of the river Sarayu. King Abhichandra was ruling over the city. Vasu was his son. The king possessed boundless wealth and the kingdom was prosperous. He was a man of great intelligence; he possessed extraordinary abilities and was an expert in the art of administration. When the prince Vasu passed through the phase of boyhood and entered the phase of youth, the king sent him to be educated in the *Ashram* of an acharya by name Kshirkadamba. I too was a student of that acharya at that time. While carrying out studies there, the Prince Vasu and Parvat, the son of the teacher became intimate friends. We were carrying out our studies with politeness, intelligence and diligence respecting the limits of propriety. The atmosphere in the *Ashram* was happy and delightful. The *Ashram* which was surrounded by various kinds of green plants and trees would fascinate anyone. Nearby, the river Sarayu flowed. Its water was pellucid and serene. The *Ashram* was surrounded by the banks of the river, magnificent Ashoka trees, mango-groves, huge, vast and wide-branching banyan trees; dark shadows of neem trees, and green and smiling fields extending to great distances. The atmosphere of the *Ashram* was always lively with the animals of the forest which kept playing about in the area. The Gurudev Kshirakadamba taught his pupils affectionately all knowledge that would bring them welfare in this world; and in the other world.

Some years passed like the water in the river.

Once, we happened to be sleeping along with our teacher on the roof of the *Ashram*. Since we had studied hard throughout the day, we fell into deep sleep as soon as we went to bed. But our Gurudev lay awake on his bed. At that time, two Munis happened to be traversing through the sky. Seeing that we were asleep, they began conversing :

“Of these three pupils, one will go to heaven; but the other two will go to hell”.

The Munis went away traversing through the sky; but their words fell on the ears of our Gurudev. He sat up on his bed greatly shocked. His compassionate heart was grieved to hear this. He felt greatly sad; and thought :

“How strange ! What did I hear ? These are great Munis who have discarded all attachments. They are men carrying out great vows. Why should they utter lies ? They would not speak falsehood even by a mistake. Then does it mean that my pupils have to go to hell ? Moreover who will go to heaven ? and who will go to hell ? Even this is not clear. If this was known clearly, it would have been good. But now I have to use my own methods and go to the roots of their statement and find out the truth.”

The Gurudev spent the whole night thinking of our future; and trying to solve the problem. He made a plan. Yet there was time for the sun-rise. Before dawn the Gurudev sent for us. We went to our teacher and politely bowed to his feet; but the Gurudev instead of bestowing his benedictions upon us as usual, was silent. At once, doubts and fears arose in our minds. Our teacher was silent for a moment or two; and then gave a cock to each of us; and said, “You must kill it; but take care that nobody sees you killing it.”

Having received the orders of our Gurudev, we proceeded towards a dense forest, engaged in our own arguments and discussions. But we could not understand anything. Our minds and hearts had grown blunt and blank. The Prince Vasu and the teacher's son Parvat went far into the thick forest; and in a lonely place where nobody could see them, killed the cocks and returned to the Ashram.

But I went far into the darkest part of the forest where dense darkness prevailed even during the day. Cannot birds and animals see ? I stopped there and remembered the words of my teacher, and I began to contemplate on them; and to assimilate them. The Gurudev's orders were that the cock should be killed in such a place that no one should see its being killed. Of course, in the place where I was standing, no one could see my action

of killing the cock; but the cock was seeing me; and I was seeing it. Countless stars and *Lokapalaks* (gods) were seeing us. Moreover, all enlightened people with their spiritual eyes were seeing us. Oh ! As I was plunged in those thoughts I could realize that there was no place in the whole universe which was not seen by someone or another. My Gurudev himself knows this truth. Though he knew this truth why did he give us the command to kill the cocks ? Probably, he wanted to test us. He was compassionate towards all *Jivas* in the world.

He was extremely benevolent to all *Jivas* and his heart abounded in kindness and compassion to all *Jivas*. When that was so how could he command us to carry out this odious and despicable action ? Surely, there is some secret hidden behind this command of my Gurudev or he might have thought of enacting this drama only to test the extent of our attainment under him. I felt naturally that the countless stars twinkling in the sky, the radiant stars brightening the sky and the moon that was gently smiling, endorsed my opinion and so without killing the cock, I returned to the *Ashram*. I approached the Gurudev who was sitting in deep meditation. I saluted him politely and stood near him. Noticing that I had returned to the *Ashram* without killing the cock, he asked me angrily.

“Do you know the consequence of ignoring the command of your teacher ?”

“But revered Gurudev ! I have not ignored your command. I have acted absolutely according to your command” I said with natural politeness.

“Did I not command you to kill the cock ?”

“Yes ! But you also put forth a condition that I should kill it at a place where no one would be able to see me killing it”.

“Could you not find such a place ?”

“There is no such place in the whole world” I said in a calm and polite manner.

"And then I narrated to my teacher all the thoughts that had occurred to me in the forest. After hearing what I said he was pleased and his face became cheerful. He seemed to have been greatly delighted. Actually, he had made the cocks out of wheat flour and had filled them with lac. He said in a lofty manner.

"Excellent! Really admirable! You have done only what a noble pupil should do", and at once he embraced me joyfully. He affectionately placed his hand over my head; and blessed me heartily. He decided. "Whatever it may be this pupil of mine is going to attain heavenly existence".

Meanwhile, Prince Vasu and Parvat, the son of the teacher came. They saluted the teacher prostrating before him and said.

"Revered sir! We have killed the cocks as commanded by you."

"But you had to kill them in a place where none could see your action of killing them."

"Yes sir! Yes! We killed our cocks in a place where no one could see us".

"Oh you sinners! Don't you see with your eyes your action? Are there not countless stars and gods watching your action? Was not your action of killing them, seen by these? Was it concealed from their eyes". The teacher rebuked them using strong language.

Acharya Kshirakadamba was greatly agitated and grieved over their action. His anguish, as he contemplated on their future, knew no bounds. At once, he realized that those two would surely go to hell. He thought of the words of the Munis and when he did so, he felt greatly shocked as if he had been struck by a thunder-bolt. He was deeply worried; and he began to scrutinize his inner self: He thought, "What is the use of my educating them? It is a waste. They have been merely studying; but they have not been able to understand the real meaning.. the inner meaning of knowledge. It has been well said "What is taught by the teacher shows its effect only in accordance with

the nature and worthiness of the taught. The rain brings about its effect in accordance with the place where it falls. The drops of rain that fall into the mouth of a cobra become transmuted into dreadful poison. The rain-water that falls into a well becomes soft and it becomes a giver of life; whereas the rain-water that falls into the sea becomes salt-water which cannot be drunk. The sports of fate are strange and inscrutable. No one knows what they are and no one can know them. My son, Parvat is my only prop. I love him more than my life. I heartily love Prince Vasu. But if these two are destined to go to hell what is the use of my leading this life? Why should I carry out the task of teaching them? Within a few moments, he developed an attitude of renunciation. He began tossing, on the waves of detachment and renunciation; and one day, he left his *Ashram* and went away to live the remainder of his life in a forest.

I too decided to leave the *Ashram* because my teacher had left it. In his absence, the *Ashram* and the surroundings appeared bleak and blighted. I had no peace of mind! By the grace of the Gurudev I had mastered all the *shastras*. So, one day, I left the *Ashram* and returned to my place. Prince Vasu also returned home; and Parvat took his father's place in the *Ashram*. So, we three were separated from one another for ever.

In course of time, King Abhichandra renounced his Kingdom and became a *Shraman*. Prince Vasu was crowned King of the city of Shuktimati. King Vasu became famous as a truthful king. He was praised everywhere. On account of his genius, his ability as an administrator, his militaric strength and prowess he became the cynosure of all the eyes in the world.

The river of time was flowing.

Once, a team of hunters came to a forest hunting. They aimed at an innocent deer with the purpose of killing it. The agile and active deer realized the intention of the hunters and in order to save its life began running. The hunters began chasing it. The deer which was running at a great speed disappeared in the hilly area of the Vindhya mountains.

One hunter chasing it entered the hilly area; and at the same time, he shot an arrow; but an astonishing event occurred. The arrow broke into pieces on the way as if it collided against some invisible object. The hunter ran to the place where the broken pieces of the arrow had fallen; and began to examine them carefully wondering how it had thus broken into pieces and against what object it had collided. As he was carefully observing the place, his hand struck against some object which seemed to be a rock. He moved his hands here and there and tried to find out the size of the invisible object; and he fell into deep thoughtfulness. "What an amazing thing! This object is not visible but it is here and can be touched. This must be surely the famous *Sphatika* gem which is invisible and which can be touched." For a few moments, he was steeped in amazement and elation. He thought that it was worthy of being in the possession of King Vasu. "If I inform him of this, he will give me a lot of money, and I can become affluent". The hunter went to King Vasu and informed him of what he had found. King Vasu heard what the hunter said; and decided to bring the *Sphatika* rock to his palace secretly with the help of the hunter; and get a splendid throne made out of it. Accordingly, he brought it to his palace. He sent for expert sculptors and ordered them to make a throne out of it. The sculptors using all their exceptional skill made a throne within a few days. When King Vasu saw the resplendent throne, he was greatly delighted and elated. He could not contain himself. He was immensely pleased with it. But at the same time, a terrible idea occurred to him: "If people come to know of the secret of my magnificent throne, all my aspirations, ambitions and desires will be frustrated. It is certain that the sculptor will speak of the throne which he has made, and will surely praise his artistic creation before others. Why should I not make an end of him? Nothing will remain afterwards to reveal the secret. If he is alive, it will be a menace to my fame and greatness."

How ungrateful was King Vasu! How horrid was his ingratitude! This is the *Samsar*. This is the horror of *Samsar*. This is the pity of *Samsar*! This is the truth about *Samsar*! This is

the meaninglessness of *Samsar*. This is the dance of destruction caused by the five senses.

Then, without hesitating even a little, Narad, addressing Ravan, continued his narration.

“Oh King ! In this world nobody really stands by another; and there especially kings do not. The ungrateful King Vasu killed all the sculptors; and buried them in a secret place. Then, making use of the advantage of the midnight, he got the throne placed in such a place in his court that nobody could see it or touch it. The next day, when the throne was not seen in the court, all were greatly amazed. There was a stir among the high dignitaries and officials of the court. The atmosphere in the Court was disturbed since everyone began to speak of it and to offer his own opinion. Everyone was worried, perplexed and agitated. All were wondering where the king would take his seat since the throne seemed to have disappeared mysteriously. Everyone said, “Why is it that the throne is not to be seen ?” Will not the king come into the court ? or has the throne been taken away and kept somewhere else ?” While they were all thinking thus, the king’s arrival was announced. Soon, the king dressed ceremoniously came into the court; and placing his steps as if in air, he climbed his throne and sat upon it while all in the court were greatly astonished because he seemed to be sitting in the air. Everyone in the court was stupefied to see this.

“Of course, the King Vasu was known for his truthfulness. “He has attained some miraculous power; and is sitting in air without any support”. No one could realize the trickery of King Vasu. Now, this news spread like wild fire over the whole world. King Vasu’s fame increased a thousandfold. Many Kings and Emperors impressed by King Vasu’s supernatural powers became his dependents accepting his overlordship.

Fame ! Whether it is genuine or not, leads man on the path of success; and makes him lord of many things like prosperity and progress.

During my wanderings, one day I happened to go to the *Ashram* of my teacher, Kshirakadamba. At that time, my tea-

cher's son, Parvat had assumed the place of his father and he was absorbed in teaching the scripture to some exceptionally intelligent students. *Ajairyashtavyam* (Aja means mesha). It means that goats should be sacrificed at a Yajna. He was explaining the meaning of the hymn thus. A Yajna should be carried out by offering goats as a sacrifice." I was shocked when I heard Parvat teaching thus. I said to him affectionately.

"Dear friend ! I think you are making a mistake in interpreting the hymn."

"What kind of a mistake ?" he asked me with a feeling of false prestige.

"Dear Parvat ! Aja does not mean a goat here as explained by you. Our Gurudev interpreted it as "food-grain three years old which cannot sprout and germinate if sown". I wonder why, you have been misinterpreting it !"

"Oh ! How is it possible ? The same Gurudev taught me and you. How can there be any difference in his interpretation? Narad ! You are uttering a lie. Our Gurudev did not interpret it thus; on the contrary, he always said that Aja meant only a goat. Moreover, the dictionary also gives the same meaning. In the dictionary it is said that *Aja* means *Mesh* or a goat". Parvat said a little angrily, trying to stick to his wrong interpretation, prompted by his sense of false prestige.

"Look here ! A word can have more than one meaning; the main meaning and the secondary meaning. Our Gurudev did not give the main meaning of the word; he gave the secondary meaning. He, no doubt, gave the main meaning of the word but with reference to a *Yajna*, he gave the secondary meaning. Actually, with reference to a *Yajna*, Aja means, food-grain three years old which cannot germinate when sown" I said making my point clear.

Parvat was angry when I gave this interpretation. He said obstinately :

"No ! No ! This is absolutely wrong. The Gurudev definitely interpreted Aja to mean a goat.

Making my point more clear I said : “Dear friend : Instead of getting angry with me please try to understand our Gurudev’s interpretation. Every teacher preaches and proclaims the *Dharma*. A teacher never preaches that goats should be sacrificed at *Yajnas* and *Yagas* (sacrifices). If Aja is taken to mean a goat, we get a precept which is wrong. No teacher gives such wrong precepts even by a mistake. Moreover, all the hymns in the scriptures expound only *Dharma* or lofty doctrines. When that is so how can they expound the principle that violence should be committed ? Therefore, your exposition does injustice to the hymn and to our Gurudev. Brother Parvat ! Discard your sense of false prestige and understand the truth that you are committing a sin by giving such false interpretations”.

Thus, our arguments and counter-arguments continued. Neither was willing to concede the other’s point. Then he said.

“If my interpretation is proved to be wrong, I will cut off my tongue and if your interpretation is proved to be wrong you must cut off your tongue. Do you agree to this ?”

“I agree; but who will settle the dispute and establish the truth ?”

“Our fellow student, King Vasu”.

I gave my consent to this without demur. How could a truthful man be perturbed ? I was fully determined to face the ordeal. Meanwhile Parvat’s mother came to settle our dispute. She sent for Parvat and said to him privily. “Oh you fool ! What a futile and perilous argument are you carrying on with Narad ! I have heard many times your father say, “Aja means food grain three years old”. Therefore what Narad has been saying is absolutely true”.

“But I”

“Impelled by your sense of false prestige you are challenging that you would cut off your tongue if your view is wrong. You are yourself cutting your feet with an axe. I do not know what fate has kept in store for you ?” His mother said with deep grief. Her agitation and anguish were indescribable.

Someone has said rightly. "Those who act without thinking; will have to pay for it heavily. They fail to achieve their aim; and become a laughing-stock in the world !"

"Dear mother ! What has happened has happened. What is done cannot be undone !"

"That is true; but . . . " and imagining the anguish and agony that would overtake her son, she wept bitterly.



XIII

MAHAKAL, THE MONSTER

“Revered mother ! My heartiest welcome to you. On seeing you, I feel that I have had a *Darshan* of my Gurudev Acharya Kshirakadamba”.

“Dear child ! Are you well ?”

“By your holy blessings we are all hale and hearty ! Now, you tell me how I may receive you and what precious presentation I can place at your holy feet, so that I may sanctify my life”.

Acharya Kshirakadamba’s wife went to the court of King Vasu without wasting even a moment, in order to prepare the way for saving her son from the impending disaster. Seeing his teacher’s wife who had never visited his court in the past, now entering his court, King Vasu descended from his throne, at once; and went forward a few steps to receive her. He politely saluted his teacher’s mother; and entreated her to be seated; and honoured her by saluting her feet.

“Oh king ! I have not come here to ask you for wealth or food-grain or other articles. What is the use of possessing wealth without my son ?”

“But mother, I trust that Parvat is....well”.

“Oh king ! I have come here to beg you to save my son’s life.”

"Mother ! Kindly stop grieving and tell me what the matter is. I honour, revere and adore Acharya Parvat who has taken my teacher's place as much as I honoured, revered and adored my great teacher Kshirakadambacharya. Even the Vedas say that the teacher's son should be revered as much as the teacher".

"Oh king ! You are, indeed blessed. Your words fill me with boundless peace and happiness. I am supremely pleased with you".

"But mother ! You have not told me from what danger or from whom my teacher's son Parvat has to be saved. Which insolent fellow is causing danger to his life ? He who has thought of killing Parvat is courting death. His days are done; and his death is certain. Why do you get agitated over this matter ? As long as Vasu is alive, there is no power in this universe that can cause any danger to Parvat's life". When King Vasu learnt from her the danger in which Parvat was caught, his anger knew no bounds.

After securing from King Vasu the assurance that he would save the life of her son, Parvat, she narrated to him the entire story of the arguments between Narad and her son; her son's challenge that he whose interpretation was wrong should cut off his tongue; and his choice of Vasu, the king to act as the judge. Then she requested him to save her son's life somehow or the other.

Hearing the story narrated by his Gurudev's wife, King Vasu was greatly shocked. If he had to save the life of Parvat he had to utter a lie. That would be a blow to his soul dealt by himself. That would be acting against his conscience. Looking towards the noble lady, he said :

"Oh mother ! How can a truthful man like me utter a lie ! Even if I were to die I cannot utter a lie. Kindly pardon me mother ! I can never do such a thing !"

"But only once....my child ! Only once. You need not utter a lie again". She said in absolute distress and helplessness.

"What you say is true. But a soul that fears uttering lies cannot utter lies at any time, even once. Moreover, here I have to utter a lie and falsify my Gurudev's interpretation. I cannot act thus. I am prepared even to give up my life for your sake; but this is impossible ! I cannot speak a lie".

King Vasu had been a truthful man throughout his life; and now how could he utter a lie that too a lie that would falsify his revered teacher's interpretation ? He firmly and clearly refused to utter a lie. But she was not prepared to appreciate the value of her husband's interpretation on account of her affection and love for her son.

Blinded by her affection for her son, she could understand only one truth. Her husband's interpretation and King Vasu's truthfulness were absolutely unimportant for her. What she desired was her son's safety and welfare.

"Dear child ! If you want to save the life of your Gurudev's son, you have to say that *Aja* means a goat in that context. Great men give up even their lives to stand by their friends and to save their lives; but here you have only to give a different interpretation. That's all. It is only a matter of interpretation", she said in a serious tone.

"You are not realizing a vital point here, mother ! If it were merely a matter of giving a different interpretation, I would have easily done it; but it is a question of acting according to the principle of truthfulness. The basic question here relates to the breaking of the principle of truthfulness. Moreover, it is a question, of safeguarding and maintaining the truthfulness of my Gurudev's interpretation; and it is a challenge to my principle of truthfulness."

Noticing that King Vasu was determined to stick to his principle, Kshirakadamba's wife became very angry. She began to burn with anger.

"All right ! If you think that your truthfulness is all important, then you safeguard it; and if you have any affection

for your teacher's son, then safeguard his life.. It is left to you. You may do whatever you deem fit.." She said angrily; and got up to leave the court. Suddenly, Vasu began to shudder. Only one question kept repeatedly rising in his mind :

"What should I do ? Which loyalty shall I prefer to the other ? If I try to save the life of my teacher's son, I will have to give up my ideal of truthfulness which I have followed throughout my life and if I should keep up my ideals it will be like throwing my teacher's son into the very jaws of death and the heart of my teacher's wife will be broken". King Vasu's mind was deeply agitated. He saw his teacher's wife, standing angry and helpless. He visualised the dreadful sight of his teacher's son cutting off his tongue. He got up at once; approached his teacher's wife who was going away; and stood before her with folded hands. He said in a polite manner;

"Mother; do not worry. Give up your agitation. I shall give my judgement in favour of Parvat. This is certain and I will not fail to keep up my promise even if the sun rises in the west instead of in the east".

The Acharya's wife showered upon King Vasu the flowers of heartfelt blessings and returned to the *Ashram*.

Parvat and I went to the court of King Vasu. I was absolutely fearless because I was pure at heart and I knew that my interpretation was right but Parvat's face was gloomy and fearful. High state officials, courtiers, many scholars, poets, artists and others were present in the court. The Royal court was also the court of justice. It is to be mentioned that there were in the royal court judges who were impartial in dispensing justice.

King Vasu sitting on the throne of *Sphatika* looked like the moon smiling in the blue sky. Very soon the court began its activity. First of all, my teacher's son Parvat deposed and stated his contention with an example. Then, in a serious voice, I recited the hymns and tried to establish my view. I placed my argument before the court. Both of us requested King Vasu to deliver an impartial judgement after weighing our statements in the scales of justice.

This was the last day for King Vasu..the last opportunity for him to hear a case and administer justice..the last even in his life in which he could show himself to be a truthful man but King Vasu who had been ensnared by the words of our teacher's mother had already made up his mind to speak an untruth and to give an unfair judgement. He pretended to scrutinise our statements carefully. He also made a pretence of consulting the other members of the court. There was absolute silence in the court. Everyone was eagerly waiting to hear the king's judgement. Their eagerness had reached a climax. Then, King Vasu announced his judgement in a grave and dignified voice.

....“As far as I remember, our Gurudev interpreted *Aja* to mean a goat”.

I was greatly shocked to hear King Vasu's judgement. My mind began to reel. Even as I was trying to recover from my shock and stupefaction, suddenly a terrible incident took place. Suddenly some unseen power began beating and hammering the throne made of *Sphatika*. It seemed as though some unseen power was hitting the throne with a massive hammer trying to break it into pieces. At once, the throne broke into fragments. Vasu fell down upon the ground with his face downwards. Blood began to flow profusely from his mouth. Enraged by the unjust verdict given by King Vasu the *Kshetra devata* or the god presiding over the place was infuriated and the terrible dance of destruction was his work. As soon as the king fell on the ground from his throne, the bird of his life flew away. Only his dead body lay on the ground. After his death; Vasu went to hell.

I was greatly stupefied to see the sport of destruction played by fate. For a few moments, I could understand nothing. But when I saw my fellow-student falling down suddenly, I was moved to pity. After Vasu's death his son Prithu Vasu became the king of the city of Shuktimati. But the enraged gods of the place did not allow even him to live. They killed even him mercilessly. Later, when his son was made the king of Shuktimati he too was killed by the gods in the same manner. In this manner, they killed eight princes one after the other. The ninth

prince called Suvasu ran away to save his life. He went away to Nagpur and the tenth prince called Brihadwaj sought refuge in Mathura.

Nobody could avoid or prevent what was happening. Vasu's line ended. No trace of their family remained. Within a single day the royal family, the king and the other members of the family were killed. The palace looked gloomy, bleak and blighted. The people of the city became furious with Parvat who had been the cause of that tragedy and they beat him and drove him out of the city. And he became a beggar and had to go from door to door begging for food. I was greatly grieved by all this, and tried to control my anguish and returned to my place. On account of the terrible events that took place at Shuktimati, for some days and nights, I could not get a wink of sleep.

Narad's throat became choked with emotion. The tears began to flow from his eyes. His lips began to shiver. He tried to control his feelings with great difficulty. Ravan, Kumbhakarna, Vibhishan and the others, who were there, were stupefied to hear the story.

"But oh divine sage ! What happened to Parvat at the end?" Ravan, the King of Lanka said after being silent for a few moments.

Narad heaved a long sigh and said : "The unfortunate Parvat kept wandering about in the forests on the banks of the river Shaktimati. He was out of his wits. He kept wandering on the banks of the Shaktimati absent-mindedly. At that time, he met there a terrible monster by name Mahakal".

"Divine sage ! Who was this Mahakal and from where did he come there ?

"Oh king of Lanka ! This monster Mahakal inspired people to commit violence at the time of *Yajnas*. On seeing Parvat, he thought of something and came forward. The story of his *Purvajanma* also is worth hearing".

"Then, you please narrate it. We are all ears". Kumbhakarna said with overflowing enthusiasm.

Narad felt impelled to narrate the story of Mahakal, the monster and he began his narration.

“Once there was a city by name Charanyugal. A king by name Ayodhan was ruling over the city with his queen, Diti. His reign was peaceful and prosperous. He was spending his days peacefully. In course of time, the queen gave birth to a daughter. The princess was beautiful and charming. She grew like a beautiful flower-creeper and her name was Sulasa.

The father and the mother were immensely happy to have such a beautiful daughter. But at the same time, they were worried because they feared that it might be difficult to find a suitable bridegroom for her. The King consulted his Chief Minister and arranged a *Swayamvar* so that his daughter might choose a bridegroom after her own heart. A large number of kings and princes came from various countries eager to secure the hand of Sulasa in marriage because Sulasa was renowned to be a young lady of exceptional beauty. Of those who came to the *Swayamvar*, there was one king by name Sagar raja. He was renowned everywhere for his heroism, fabulous wealth and for his magnificent appearance. As soon he came there, he adopted a diplomatic method. By this method, he established contacts upto the harem through his attendant, Mandodari. He began to find out with the help of Mandodari, clues to the harem. He tried to find out secrets about the harem. Just at this time, once, Queen Diti went into the garden behind the harem, with her daughter, Sulasa to stroll about. Mandodari secretly followed them into the garden and overheard their conversation concealing herself in a bush.

Queen Diti and Sulasa sat in a bower of creepers to take rest; and began conversing. While they were conversing about various things, Queen Diti, incidentally asked her daughter :

“Dear daughter ! Whom will you choose, among the princes assembled in the *Swayamvar* for your husband ?”

“I have not yet made up my mind about it, mother !”

“Will you listen to my advice ?”

“What is it ? If I do not respect your advice whose advice else would I respect ?”

“I hope you know Madhuping, my brother’s son”.

“I know him very well”.

“What do you think of him ?”

“He is heroic and valiant”.

“Enough ! My heartfelt desire is that you must choose him for your husband. You please decorate his neck with the garland of acceptance” Diti said feeling happy.

Mandodari heard this conversation from her place of concealment among the bushes. Hearing the proposal made by Diti, she was greatly startled and shocked. Yet the conversation was still incomplete. Sulasa had not given any reply to her mother’s proposal. Mandodari was impatient to hear Sulasa’s reply.

Sulasa began to think deeply about the unexpected proposal made by her mother. “Madhuping is a prince of high birth belonging to the lunar dynasty. He possesses a fascinating appearance; an extraordinary heroism and exceptional intelligence. If I choose him for my husband my mother will be supremely happy; and I too will find an ideal husband and will live happily with him”.

Thinking thus for a few minutes, she said shyly : “Mother ! I will surely act according to your desire. In the *Swayamvar* I will choose Madhuping”.

Mandodari began to rage with anger on hearing Sulasa’s reply. At once, she went running to the guest-house of ‘*Sagar raja*’.

The auspicious evening *Arti* had been performed in the temples. The goddess of the evening who had been decorated with colourful garments had disappeared a few moments ago. Slowly and gradually a cover of blackness was falling over the

city of Charanyugal. Stars seemed to be getting ready for their journey through the sky in the night. Lights were burning in the guest-house of king Sagar raja. Without stopping anywhere, Mandodari went straight to King Sagar raja's room. King Sagar raja who had been walking, to and fro, in his room stopped. Startled by Mandodari's appearance, he glanced towards her and became anxious on seeing the feeling of anxiety and fear expressed in her face :

"What is the matter ? You have come at such a time as this? King Sagar raja sat upon a chair covered with a beautifully designed white cloth and said looking towards her.

"Your Excellency ! I am sorry to say the purpose with which you have come will not be fulfilled".

"What are you prattling ?" said Sagar raja angrily.

"Your Excellency ! What I am saying is the truth. We are not likely to succeed in our objective. You may leave this place at once with your followers for your capital". Every word uttered by Mandodari increased King Sagar raja's eagerness and agitation.

"What exactly is the matter ?"

"Sulasa has already chosen her husband."

"Whom ?"

"She has chosen Madhuping, the prince of Kalinga".

"Where did you hear this ?" Sagar raja's anxiety and agitation knew no bounds."

"Straight from the mouth of Sulasa". Then Mandodari narrated, in full, the entire conversation that had taken place between Sulasa and her mother in the garden.

Stillness reigned in the room. Sagar raja became furious on hearing about Sulasa's decision. He ordered Mandodari to leave the room. He was now alone in the room. On account of agitation and worry his mind and heart were benumbed and

blank. What would happen to Sagar raja if in the *Swayamvara*, Sulasa chose Madhuping? His extraordinary wealth, his tremendous heroism, his greatness, his exceptional ability, his indisputable excellence would all be futile and ineffectual. Sagar raja felt that it would be extremely disgraceful to return home without winning the hand of Sulasa. He thought, "What plan shall I make by means of which I can prevent Sulasa from choosing Madhuping?" There seemed to be no other way except taking recourse to some deceitful plan. He could not get a wink of sleep and he had no peace of mind. He was deeply worried and agitated. He kept tossing on his bed endlessly. He thought if he did not secure the hand of Sulasa in marriage, it would be a great disgrace to him. He was in deep despair. There seemed to be no ray of hope, by means of which he could solve the problem.

Probably, the *Jivatma* desires only these things. The *Jiva* desires that his wishes should be fulfilled and that he should get happiness. In accordance with that desire, he acts and thinks. The desires of a person may be fulfilled but in order to see that his desires are fulfilled he has to experience many difficulties and has to put forth endeavours. Sulasa was an object of attraction. Sagar raja desired her. He came to the city of Charan-yugal with the purpose of marrying her and attaining happiness in his life. Sagar raja might marry and enjoy sensual pleasures later. But before that he had to experience a lot of agitation, worry and distress.

When Sagar raja realised that he was losing the stake he thought of sending Madhuping to the abode of death in order to secure the hand of Sulasa. How harmful and terrible is the desire born out of sensual fascination! If one could attain sensual pleasures either by killing somebody or by staining the person's character, one would not hesitate to do such things. Sensual cravings blind such a person.

Such are the pleasures of *Samsar*.

Someone's fall becomes necessary for somebody else's rise. Somebody builds a magnificent palace demolishing the

hutmments of others. Destruction is necessary for creation. Someone's ruin is necessary for somebody else's progress. Somebody's death brings happiness to somebody else. Somebody's lamentation is necessary for somebody else's jubilation.

After much hesitation, Sagar raja decided to find out a way to humiliate Madhuping. At once, he sent for his court-priest Vishwabhuti. When the priest came, he said :

"Vishwabhuti ! Today I have to confide a secret matter to you. I have to place in your hands an important responsibility".

"Dear King ! Give your commands. Your servant Vishwabhuti is always ready to receive orders from you and carry them out. I will carry out your commands even if they are hard and difficult".

"Of course, there can be nothing impossible for a man of genius like you, yet...."

"Oh king ! Whatever this duty may be; however impossible it may be, I will carry it out risking my life".

When King Sagar raja heard the reply given by his court-priest, he felt as though a new ray of hope flashed through the darkness of his despair.

"Oh you learned man ! You must compose a great book under the title, Nripalakshana samhita in which you must describe the various essential qualities of a king. You must describe such qualities as are found in me and as are totally absent in prince Madhuping. Those qualities which you describe should not be present in Madhuping even to the least extent. You must compose this book by tomorrow and those who read this book should know that Madhuping is unfit to be a king".

The court-priest saluted the king politely and said : "Your Excellency, I shall do so".

The next day, the royal court assembled. All the kings, princes, Chiefs and potentates who had come for the *Swayamvar* were present. In the middle of the court on a

splendid throne King Sagar raja the very embodiment of exceptional heroism and deception was seated. King Ayodhan sat on a throne beside him. When the activities of the court were about to begin, suddenly the court-priest, Vishwabhuti entered. He carried in his hands a box covered with a costly cloth. Suddenly, there was pin-drop silence in the court.

“Dear priest ! What have you brought ?” King Ayodhan asked him breaking the silence.

“My lord ! this is an ancient *Grantha*”.

“What is the title of the book ?” King Ayodhan asked him inquisitively.

“It is entitled, “*Nripalakshana samhitha*”. It contains a detailed description of the qualities of an ideal king”.

“Really ! The title is really arresting and beautiful. I hope the book is also beautiful and arresting”.

“Yes, Your Excellency ! It is”.

“You please read a little and explain it. Probably all will enjoy it”.

“My lord ! I will carry out your command. I will read it just now”. Then Vishwabhuti opened the box and took out a beautiful book.

“Oh learned man ! Please wait a little. I want to say something”. King Sagar raja said speaking in the middle.

“Yes. My dear king ! You may say what you want to say”. the court-priest said permitting King Sagar raja to express his opinion.

“Before you begin reading that book, all of us, that is, all the kings, princes, chiefs and potentates who have gathered here for the *Swayamvar* should take an oath”.

“What oath, my dear king ?”

"This *Grantha* is entitled *Nripalakshana samhitha*. That means, it contains a description of the qualities of an ideal king. After we hear your reading of the *Grantha* and after we understand the qualities of an ideal king if we find in this assembly of kings, princes, Chiefs and potentates anyone who does not possess even a hundredth part of those qualities then that prince should be killed in the court or at least he should be expelled by all the others." On hearing what Sagar raja said all were silent. Absolute silence prevailed in the court for sometime. Then, they began saying something to one another in whispers, and the situation became serious. If anyone opposed King Sagar raja's suggestion it would be evident to others that he was afraid of taking the oath and that those qualities were not present in him. Each one feared that if he opposed it the others would think that he lacked those qualities and that for that reason he was opposing the suggestion. But if the suggestion was accepted it would surely affect the interest of someone or the other. Moreover, the time fixed for the *Swayamvar* approached. But someone or the other might have to face the calamitous consequence. Everyone felt that king Sagar raja's suggestion was improper, irrelevant and disagreeable. But how could anyone oppose it? Who had the courage to bell the cat? Even king Ayodhan could not oppose it because it was he who had arranged the *Swayamvar*. It would not be proper on his part to oppose it. All those who had gathered in the royal court were his honoured guests. Whom could he oppose? and whom could he support? If he opposed it, he would be dishonouring King Sagar raja.

Everyone was silent. "Silence is consent. Since all are silent, I assume that all have given their consent. Vishwabhuti! Now, you may read the book without any hesitation". King Sagar raja said without delay. The tone of his voice showed that he was impatient. Vishwabhuti began reading the *Grantha*. He interpreted every quality mentioned in the book in such a clever manner that within a short time, it was clear to everyone in the royal court that if there was one in that court, who possessed all those qualities, it was King Sagar raja and if there was anyone in the

court who did not possess anyone of those qualities it was Prince Madhuping. As the Pandit continued to read the book, everyone's eyes turned towards Prince Madhuping. They looked at him with contempt. They seemed to be looking down upon him; and seemed to despise him. They seemed to be scoffing at him. It did not take much time for Prince Madhuping who possessed an incisive intelligence to realize that it was a conspiracy planned to dishonour and to humiliate him. He thought: "All this is a conspiracy made to humiliate and frustrate me so that King Sagar raja may get the hand of Sulasa and so that I may be defeated". But he did not have any evidence with which he could prove that the book was not authentic. He found himself in an intricate and even perilous situation. He felt greatly dishonoured and left the court, at once.

His anger knew no bounds. His body began to shake with anger. There arose hatred and bitter contempt in his heart for Sagar raja.

After leaving the royal court, he went away in an unpremeditated direction. Even after going a long distance away from the frontiers of Charanyugal, he did not stop. He continued his journey without stopping. On his way, he passed through forests; crossed fields; passed through cities and towns and villages and he continued thus leaving them behind and when completely tired, he stopped on his way. He found himself on awakening, in the midst of a thick forest. It was an absolutely desolate area for miles and miles around, abounding in green plants, trees and bowers communing with the sky; and the land was stony and flinty. These were his companions. There, he carried out an austere penance with the purpose of attaining such miraculous powers as would enable him to take revenge against Sagar raja. In fact, since he had humiliated him he wanted to send him to the Kingdom of Death.

But though he carried out countless penances, he could not attain the powers he desired. In spite of all his severe penances, his desires remained unfulfilled. King Sagar raja married Sulasa and went away to his Kingdom.

In course of time, Prince Madhuping who was deeply and bitterly frustrated, passed away.

On King ! Prince Madhuping was born as a great monster called Mahakal.

XIV

THE REVENGE

“Do you recognise me brother ?”

A stranger asked Parvat who was wandering about on the banks of the river Shaktimati.

Hearing these words uttered by somebody who seemed to be very near him Parvat stopped suddenly. When he lifted his face and looked about, he saw very near him a person standing before him who was staring at him with fixed eyes.

Parvat closely observed the stranger with fixed eyes and said in a grave voice; “No. I do not recognise you”.

“You do not recognise me ? Remember the past and look at me closely. I am Shandilya. I am a bosom friend of your father Kshirakadamba”, said he.

“Do you say that you are a friend of my father’s”.

“Yes, your father and I studied together under Acharya Gautam”.

“All right. How did you happen to come here ?”

“I came to know that Parvat, the exceptionally intelligent son of my friend was driven away from the city of Shuktimati by the people and by Narad; so giving up all my duties I have come running here. I am happy that I have met you. I know everything”.

He paused a little to see what effect his words might produce on Parvat and then he said again :

“But dear child ! Now, there is no need to worry since I am here to help you. When I am here to help you I have to stand by you and no one in the world can shake you”.

“What can you do ?”

“You are indeed a genius, my child ! But you do not know me fully. I can conquer and captivate the whole world with magical powers. I will disseminate and propagate your doctrine throughout the world and I will see that it will be spread all over the world. Not only that; I will see that your fame will spread from one end of the world to the other”.

On hearing the words of Shandilya for a few moments Parvat kept oscillating. He began to dream of a glorious future in his life. He felt that he would again gain honour and prestige in the world.

Indeed, those people who are eager to fall into the bottomless depths of ruin find some occasion or support. Parvat felt greatly drawn towards Shandilya; and he liked what he said. Shandilya caught Parvat, in his snare by means of his cleverness and cunning; and he began to implement his own plans by using Parvat as a means.

“Oh King of Lanka ! The practice of killing animals at *Yajnas* began thus”. Narad said in reply to Ravan’s question, by way of a background.

“Did Mahakal, the monster (i.e. Shandilya) inspire people to kill animals at *Yajnas* ?”

“Yes. Mahakal initiated this practice only to take revenge against King Sagar raja”.

“But Narad ! You have not told us how Mahakal initiated this practice and how he took revenge against Sagar raja”.

Narad was silent for a while. Then clearing his throat, he began :

“Shandilya and Parvat complemented each other’s efforts. Step by step, they went on together carrying out their plan. By means of his magical powers, Shandilya became a saviour to the people in villages, towns and cities distressed by dreadful diseases and ailments. He went to such places and preached.

“Those who understand and appreciate Parvat’s doctrines; follow him and act according to his precepts will be free from the clutches of dreadful diseases”. Accordingly, those who followed Parvat’s precepts became free from dreadful ailments and agonies. This was the result of the efficacy of Shandilya’s magical powers. Hence, very soon there appeared a large number of devoted followers who followed Parvat with implicit faith. While travelling from place to place, they once happened to go to the city of King Sagar raja. Formerly, the city was the abode of all dreadful diseases, agonies and anguish. Many members of the royal family, many courtiers and a large member of people had fallen victims to many dreadful ailments. Plague, cholera, small-pox and other such diseases had cast their net and caught countless people in it.

The news had already reached the ears of Sagar raja that the only person who could deliver people from those dreadful diseases was Parvat. Those who followed Parvat got out of all their agonies and anguish completely. Seeing that several members of his family were afflicted with those dreadful diseases, Sagar raja was looking for Parvat. In fact, he wanted to go out in search of Parvat. Just at that time he received the news that Parvat had come to the city and that he was staying in a garden outside the city. “What does not a dying man do ?” Sagar raja went to the garden with some prominent members of his court to meet Parvat. Parvat was sitting on a wooden seat. His body was shining like gold. On his forehead he wore a colourful circular *tilak*. There hung on his shoulders an upper cloth which was a red silken garment. Around him there sat a large number of people afflicted with various dreadful diseases.

Sagar raja entered his tent; prostrated before Parvat and said in a humble manner.

“Oh you great sage ! On account of your boundless grace my subjects are liberated from dreadful diseases. Many members of our family and many of our courtiers and officers were cured of their diseases. Oh lord! Be gracious towards me. I shall be a humble devotee of yours throughout my life”.

“Oh King ! It is my primary duty to free people from their sorrows, agitations and diseases by eradicating those evils”. Parvat said in a grave tone. Shandilya exercising his magical powers freed the Kingdom of Sagar raja from all diseases and agonies. In his kingdom, now, there was peace everywhere. All were happy. Sagar raja was immensely happy. At the same time, Parvat's fame and name spread all over the world. The number of his followers kept increasing by leaps and bounds. Shandilya and Parvat made a profound impression upon Sagar raja by means of their magical powers.

Poor Sagar raja could not realise that what was happening was the result of a well-planned conspiracy and that the conspiracy had been hatched by none other than his own enemies and that the conspiracy had its roots in his present and past lives. In order to take revenge against him, Madhuping who was a prince in his former life had been born as Mahakal, the monster, or Shandilya and he had brought about all these things; using Parvat as a means. Actually ignorance is a dreadful enemy of man. On account of his ignorance Sagar raja who was himself a master of deception could not understand the secret motives behind the actions of Parvat and Shandilya. His ignorance prevented him from realising the evil designs of Mahakal, the monster and his own ignorance cast him into the jaws of death. It is for this reason that the supreme Jineshwar Bhagwans preach to people to attain *Keval Jnan* and to root out their ignorance. On account of his ignorance man cannot distinguish good from evil; a friend from a foe; not only this, on account of ignorance, man looks upon a friend as an enemy and on an enemy as a friend. Yes. On account of ignorance, man

cannot understand himself and cannot realise the natural form of his own soul. What other tragedy can be there than this in human life? As long as man does not realise his real nature and form and as long as he does not attain self-realisation, he has to keep wandering through the dark forest of dreadful ignorance. This is an eternal truth like the sun; and man has to recognise and accept this truth.

Sagar raja was completely ensnared, by Parvat. He was completely in Parvat's power. He impelled Sagar raja to drink liquor, to develop intimacy with prostitutes, to eat meat and to engage himself in many other evil activities under the pretext of advising him to carry out *Yajnas* and *Yagas*; according to his prescriptions. Parvat explained to Sagar raja the efficacy of the various *Yagas* and *Yajnas* and asked him to get such rituals carried out by people. At the same time, he gave him this piece of advice. "It is not sinful to drink liquors at the time of a *Yajna*; it is not sinful to develop intimacy with other women for carrying out certain activities of a *Yajna* and the *Shastras* approve of people eating meat as *Prasad* (the gift of a *Yajna*)". According to his suggestions cattle were sacrificed at *Yagas*. *Yajnas* were organised again and again. When Sagar raja became addicted to wine, women, and meat, Parvat as directed by Mahakal said this while explaining to him the *Matruiyajna* (*Yajna* for the mother) and the *Pitruiyajna* (*Yajna* for the father) etc. :

"If you want your mother to go to heaven you have to perform *Matruiyajna* and sacrifice your mother at the *Yajna*. If you want your father to attain heaven you have to sacrifice your father at the *Pitruiyajna*". Moreover, Mahakal the monster, by virtue of his tremendous miraculous powers cast a magical spell as a result of which even in the bright day-light divine air-ships appeared in the sky in which heavenly beings were seated. They announced that they had attained to the heavenly state only by performing such *Yajnas*.

What does a blind man desire? He wishes for two eyes. Who does not wish to attain heavenly existence? People all over the country began to perform *Yajnas*. "As is the King; so

are the subjects". The people of the country took the example of their king and organized *Yajnas*. Without any fears or doubts, all began to perform *Yajnas* publicly. On every auspicious occasion, festival or celebration, King Sagar raja arranged and carried out *Yajnas*, as a matter of routine. The people followed his example. Thus, began the tradition of sacrificing animals on the sacrificial altar.

"Oh King ! all this was disgusting... all this was detestable and from the human point of view, it was despicable. When I heard this I was greatly shocked. I felt that all this was unbearable and horrid; therefore, in order to save the lives of the animals that were being killed on the sacrificial altar, I invited a friend of mine, a Vidyadhar by name, Divakar and I asked him to help me in preventing these animal sacrifices. Divakar agreed to my suggestion and promised to help me whenever necessary. Accordingly, wherever animals were collected to be offered as a sacrifice at a *Yajna*, Divakar, the Vidyadhar appeared there and by virtue of his miraculous powers took away those animals. In the beginning, we were fully successful in carrying out our plans. But when the animals at every *Yajna* began to disappear Mahakal the monster was shocked. He in his endeavour to discover the secret cause for the mysterious disappearance of the sacrificial animals employed his power of seeing called *Vibhangajnan* and found out our plan. He saw Divakar, the Vidyadhar taking away the animals and he became careful and cautious in his activity. He found out a way of taking revenge against Divakar, the Vidyadhar and to counteract and defeat his powers. In accordance with his plan, he installed the image of Lord Rishabhdev in every place before the commencement of the *Yajna*. As a result of this, Divakar, the Vidyadhar though he possessed extraordinary powers became powerless and his attempts failed. Day by day, Divakar's powers became more and more ineffectual. I was unable to do anything and helplessly I gave up my plans to save the lives of animals."

Mahakal, the monster got various kinds of *Yajnas* carried out by Sagar raja and thus prepared the way to throw him into the jaws of Death.

At the appropriate time, he arranged the *Pitruryajna* and *Matruryajna* at the palace of king Sagar raja. Finding a suitable opportunity Parvat said to the sons of Sagar raja: "Now, the time has come for you to send your father and mother to heaven; and by carrying out this holy act at the *Yajna* you have to attain *Punya* (merit)". Even the sons of Sagar raja were influenced by the words of Parvat. Therefore, they decided to act according to his advice and to send their parents to heaven.

Accordingly, the *Yajna* began on the appointed day, *Mantras* were recited. There was a jubilant assemblage of people to kill animals; and to eat meat. Cans of liquor were drunk. The revelry of the hypocrites went on behind the curtains. In accordance with his plan, Parvat made king Sagar raja and Sulasa eat heavy quantities of meat and drink liquor heavily. As the night advanced, Sagar raja became more and more intoxicated; while Parvat remained cautious. Within a short time, Parvat began to recite the *Pitrumedha mantra* in a loud voice. According to the previous instructions of Parvat Sagar raja's son lifted him and threw him into the terrible flames of the *Yajna*. When Parvat recited the *Matrumedh mantra* they lifted their mother Sulasa and threw her into the burning fire. Thus Sagar raja and Sulasa were sacrificed to the *Yajna*.

Everything was over within a few moments. Sagar raja was burnt.

Mahakal's heart grew cool and satisfied. He breathed a sigh of relief. Long ago he had vowed to take revenge against Sagar raja and now he had achieved his objective. Now he did not need the help of Parvat. Leaving Parvat to knock about from pillar to post, Mahakal returned to his place.

"Oh what a terrible king of selfishness ! In order to attain his selfish objective he had caused the cruel killing of countless innocent animals. What a great enormity ! How tremendously harmful it was !"

"Dashmukh Ravan ! Since that time this tradition of killing animals of *Yajnas* continued unimpeded. Many evil practices

have crept into these rituals under the name of *Dharma*. I do not know when this harmful tradition will end. Oh king ! I entreat you to prevent the killing of animals at *Yajnas* wherever that enormity is going on because only you are capable of checking this tradition”.

“Oh Divine sage ! I shall willingly carry out your commands. As long as I am alive, I will see that this kind of killing of animals at *Yajnas* will not take place”.

Then, Narad expressed his desire to leave that place. Both the kings went upto the door to see him off. Narad went up into the sky and disappeared within the twinkling of an eye.

King Maruth's astonishment knew no bounds. The same question began vexing him again and again, “Who is this divine being whom even such a great hero as Ravan salutes and honours ?”

He could not control his astonishment for a long time. He looked towards Ravan and said :

“Oh you great hero ! Who is this gracious divine being who has saved me from a terrible sin ?”

“Oh king ! Don't you know him ? He is the divine sage Narad renowned throughout the three worlds. His previous history is also wonderful and thrilling”.

“Dear brother ! Please tell us the story of Narad”. This is a day on which we can mentally range up to the horizons of the past”. Vibhishan insisted upon hearing the story of Narad. The day was declining :

After hearing the story of the tradition of killing animals at *Yajnas* from Narad they were eager to know his story. Moreover, they were all happy that they had got the opportunity of hearing the story from Ravan himself.

Pausing for a few moments, Ravan began narrating the story of Narad.

"There was a thick forest. It abounded in huge trees, beautiful plants, bowers and bushes. Nature was so beautiful there that it filled the hearts of people with peace and felicity. Countless birds sang melodious songs in the trees and the whole place looked beautiful and fascinating. The atmosphere was so cool and felicitous that it filled the hearts of people with sweet serenity. Every object and aspect of the area seemed to be radiating heavenly felicity. Every particle of the earth seemed to be scattering countless rays of ineffable felicity and serenity. There was an *Ashram* in that forest. It was a small cottage in the midst of serene surroundings. A certain *Tapasi* (one who endeavours to attain spiritual excellence) was living there with his wife.

Bramharuchi was the name of the *Tapasi* and his wife's name was Kurmi. They used to eat the fruits available in the forest and they drank the cool and soft water of a river that flowed nearby. They wore bark dress; and spent the whole day in the glorification of the Paramatma. Of course, they were not celibate. In course of time, the *Tapasi's* wife became pregnant. In those days, once, an auspicious event took place.

A group of Jain Sadhus who were carrying on their *Vihar* (travel on foot) happened to come to the *Ashram*. Bramharuchi received them with great honour and treated them with hospitality. The sadhus took rest in the shadow of a huge tree after cleaning the ground. Bramharuchi humbly sat down in front of the sadhus. The sadhus by virtue of their profound knowledge realised that Bramharuchi possessed an elevated character and that his soul was chastened and in the hearts of those sadhus there sprouted a desire to give him the right direction and guidance and to lead him on the path of righteousness and nobility.

"Noble man ! We think that you have been living here for quite some years", said the sadhus by way of commencing a conversation with him.

"Yes, sir. You are right".

“Discarding wealth and possessions and social contacts and the comforts of the life in the world why are you living here away from society ?”

“I am trying to attain the supreme knowledge”.

“But when you are leading worldly life even in this forest how can you attain perfect knowledge ?”

“I do not know anything, my dear sir ! What are you suggesting ?”

“If a person has to attain perfect knowledge he has to renounce all sensual pleasures. He must keep away from women. In order to attain supreme knowledge, you must carry out such activities as spiritual austerities, meditations, self-sacrifice, rendering service to spiritual heads and carrying out external and internal austerities. You cannot live a sinless life just because you are living in a forest; nor can you give the gift of fearlessness to the *Shatkaijivas* the six kinds of *Jivas*, having body such as the *Prithivikay*, *Apkay* etc.”

The Tapasi listened to the words of the sadhu with deep concentration. These sadhus explained to him the sinless way of spiritual endeavours as expounded by Lord Jineswardev. They explained to him the daily activities of a Sadhak and the profound doctrines of the Paramatma.

All of a sudden, the light of *Samyagjnan* was kindled in the heart of the Tapasi. The words of the sadhus exercised a deep impact upon him. He entertained a desire to pursue the path of internal spiritual endeavours. He understood from them the spiritual endeavours that should be carried out by a man as a householder. At the same time, there arose in his heart a desire to reach a higher level of existence. When he understood fully all the details relating to the life of a sadhu his delight knew no bounds.

Then he called his wife Kurmi also to hear the precepts of the *Shramans*. She too came there and learnt from them the principles relating to the life of householders. She too desired

be become a *Shravika*. Brahmaruchi asked her if she would give her consent to his becoming a sadhu; and whether that would cause any unhappiness to her. Kurmi was a noble lady; and she knew her duty very well. It did not take much time for her to understand her husband's opinion and his spiritual aspiration. So, she happily gave her consent to his becoming a sadhu. The *Tapasi*, Brahmaruchi obtained his wife's consent; and, at once, he became a *Shraman*. He received from the *Shramans* initiation into the *Sadhudharma*; and Kurmi who was pregnant became a *Shravika*.

The *Shraman*, Brahmaruchi carried out *Padyatra* with the other *Shramans* going from place to place and remained in their company; and Kurmi remained in the *Ashram* living according to the principle of the *Shravikadharma*; and taking proper care of the child in her womb.

Every day, she recited with devotion, the *Namaskar Maha Mantra* taught her by the *Shramans*. She spent most of her time in contemplating and meditating on Lord Jineshwar. She gave up eating prohibited food such as roots. She ate only the fruits that could be eaten according to the principles of the *Shravikadharma*. She drank the water of the river, after filtering it.

Thus she spent the nine months of her pregnancy. She gave birth to a beautiful and radiant male-child. Some extraordinary incidents took place at the time of his birth. As soon as being born, he did not cry like other children. Because he did not cry, he was named *Narad* (one who does not cry).

Once, the lady left her child sleeping on a bed of leaves in the shadow of a tree and went to fetch water from the river.

Just at that time, a god belonging to the line of *Jrumbhak*, who had come down to earth, to visit all the holy places was returning home after having visited all the *Tirthas*. On account of the sublime merit (*Punya*) of the child, the heavenly being was greatly fascinated by him. In order to fulfil his desire, he decided to carry away the child. Accordingly, he abducted the

child and went away; but he did not realize how bitterly the mother would be grieved when she found her son missing. He did not realize that she would be heart-broken and lament bitterly over the disappearance of her son; and that she would wander madly from door to door, in search of her son.

In fact, such are the *Jivas in Samsar*. They care only for their own happiness or peace; but they do not care even a little, to think of the sorrows of others. Ignoring the joys of others, they think of their own joys.

A little while later, Kurmi returned to her *Ashram*. She went straight to the place where she had laid the child asleep; but the child had disappeared from the tender bed of flowers. She was thunder-struck to find that her child was not on the bed. Her heart and mind became blank. Her mind was paralysed. Recovering from her shock, she began to search madly for her child, everywhere. But she could not find her child anywhere. She was greatly overwhelmed with grief. Her throat became choked with grief. Her lips began to quiver in sheer helplessness and distress. Weeping in a heart-rending manner, she began to wander through the forest. The tears flowed from her eyes like streams. She felt as though a mountain had fallen upon her head. She could not bear the separation from her son. She never ate anything: she did not even drink water. She could think of doing nothing except lamenting over the loss of her child. She kept wondering what had happened to her child. "Probably some wild animal of the forest has carried away and eaten my child. Probably, some robbers carried away my child. I do not know what agonies my child is experiencing". She thought thus. She could not bear to live in the *Ashram*. She looked at the *Ashram* and sobbed bitterly. The beauty of nature there; the melodious songs of the birds; and the sports of the animals which used to delight her formerly now caused distress to her. She felt that the *Ashram* was like a burial ground.

The wheel of time kept revolving. But the boy was not to be found anywhere. In consequence, Kurmi also decided to receive initiation into the *Samyamdharm* which her husband

had explained to her. During that time, she happened to meet fortunately a sadhvi by name Indumala. She received initiation from her. Kurmi dived into the well of the nectar of self-discipline; and forgot all her anguish; and she attained serenity.

In the heavenly world, the boy, Narad was being brought up with overflowing affection. In course of time, Narad grew up into a young man of great charm and radiance. He achieved an absolute mastery over many arts, accomplishments and *shastras* on account of his incisive and exceptional intelligence. When he entered the threshold of youth, the gods taught him the miraculous art of travelling through the sky.

Narad preferred to wear peculiar dress and decorations. He allowed his hair to grow into large and small plaits and knots. As if that was not enough, he wore garlands and wreaths of flowers. He possessed such qualities as youthfulness, clever and agile playfulness, clear speech and talkativeness. He did not become a *Grihasta* nor did he become a *Sadhu*. Since he mastered the art of travelling through the sky, he began visiting holy places. While travelling through the sky, if he noticed any fascinating city, or beautiful forest or a magnificent mountain or a hill, or caves or any other fascinating places or objects, he used to come down to earth to see them. He had mastered the skill of knowing the secret of any matter. If he went to any house and if the master of the house did not treat him with honour and hospitality, he would create such a situation that the master would seek his own death, preferring death to his anguish. Now, he is a great sage. Yet, he loves dissensions. He creates quarrels wherever he goes. He takes great delight in creating fierce flames in cool water and in causing discord where concord prevails. He is a great lover of music. That is why he always carries with him a lute.

At the same time, his heart is an ocean of sublime virtues. He has undertaken the vows called the *Anuvrats*".

"Oh king of kings ! What kind of vows are called *Anuvrats*?" King Maruth asked him in the middle.

“There are five kinds of *Anuvrats*. He who observes these vows for sometime is called an *Anuvrati* and he who observes them always is called a *Mahavrati*.

- (1) One should not commit violence.
- (2) One should not utter falsehood at any time.
- (3) One should not steal at any time.
- (4) One should discard sexual activity or one should practise absolute celibacy.
- (5) One should not have attachment for anything.

Narad observes these five *Anuvrats* partially. Just now you saw how much he was upset and agitated when he saw violence being committed at a *Yajna*. He was deeply moved by it; and also you realized that he came down from the sky to stop that violence. He always keeps wandering through the sky over this world. He does not halt at any place for a long time. He keeps off love and matrimony. He has been absolutely celibate; and he will continue to be so”.

After thus narrating the story of the divine sage, Narad; Ravan took leave of King Maruth and got ready to travel towards his destination with all his followers and his army.



XV

A MEETING WITH MADHU AT MATHURA

Ravan had stayed at Rajpur longer than he had expected. He married Kanakprabha the beautiful daughter of King Maruth; so there appeared a deep bond of friendship and alliance between the two powerful kings. Ravan spent some days happily sporting in the fascinating gardens and bowers around Rajpur. One day, Khar, the king of Pathal Lanka said to Ravan:

“Oh King of Lanka! We have to set off from here. Our objective has not yet been achieved. We have to defeat our powerful enemies and achieve a victory. Our march of victory has to be crowned with success”.

“Yes! Yes! You are right. It is a good thing that you have reminded me of it. We had completely forgotten our objective”. And at once, Ravan gave orders to his vast army to prepare themselves for the march of victory; and when all preparations had been made, he set off from Rajpur with his followers and his vast army; and began travelling through the sky.

A short while later, Sugriv, the king of the Vanaras said in a loud voice :

“Dear friend Dashagriv! We are now travelling over Mathura”.

“Sugriv! We have to halt here a little. Please give orders to land the airship here”.

Within a few moments, the plains near the city of Mathura began teeming with men and horses and elephants. As soon as

the king of Mathura received the news of the arrival of Ravan, he came happily, with the members of his family, ministers and courtiers, in order to receive Ravan with honour and hospitality. They embraced each other affectionately and began conversing about their welfare and progress. All of a sudden, Ravan's eyes fell on prince Madhu who sat beside his father Harivahan, the king of Mathura; and he was startled. Prince Madhu was sweet-looking like honey and was very radiant. His body which seemed to be spouting forth honey fascinated everyone by its extraordinary grace and charm. Sweet smiles decked his face which was like an unsullied vessel of nectar.

Ravan kept gazing at him for sometime; and he was greatly astonished. He saw the weapon called "*Shul*" (spear) which was with Madhu. It was not a toy or play-thing carried to be seen by others; it was indeed a divine weapon. The King of Lanka was amazed by its radiance, its form and the heroism it suggested by its very appearance.

He said to King Harivahan. "Oh King ! How did the prince attain this extraordinary weapon ?"

King Harivahan suggested to the prince by means of a sign to narrate the story. Accordingly, the prince began to narrate the story in a tender voice.

"Oh you revered King ! A wonderful and thrilling story is hidden behind this "*Shul*".

"Dear child ! We wish to hear the story. It will surely delight us. You may narrate it without any hesitation." Ravan said, sitting near him and stroking affectionately on his back.

Prince Madhu began to narrate his story.

"Once, on a certain silent and starry night, I sat at the window of the top storey of my magnificent palace; enjoying the beauties of nature. I was deeply absorbed in contemplating on the sky brightened by millions of stars. Peace and silence held their sway everywhere. All were sleeping soundly. The moon was playing hide and seek with stars in the cool air. The

whole atmosphere was filled with an indescribable serenity and happiness. Just then, all of a sudden, a divine form appeared before me. At once, I thought : "He is surely some heavenly being", and then I said to him.

"Who are you, sir ? Whence have you come ? What may be the purpose of your coming here ?"

"Dear prince ! I will narrate a story to you. Listen to it with concentration. You will automatically get answers to your questions". The divine being said in a suggestive manner.

And actually, he narrated to me an astonishing story. Now, I will narrate that story to you. Of course, a duplicate can never be the original; you see ! The style of his captivating narration; his metallic voice, his way of narrating the story, his expressions, gestures and actions keep surging up again and again in my mind; and appear in my dreams and fill me with an indescribable delight.

The divine being narrated the story in a voice of abounding affection :

"Dear Madhu ! Just as this *Jambudweep* is located on this earth, there is an island called *Dhathakikand* on the other side of the salt sea. It is a vast and fascinating island, a magnificent creation of nature. Like our *Bharatkshetra*, there is one area in that island called *Iravat*. There was a beautiful city called *Mahapur* in *Iravat*. The city of *Mahapur* had one hundred gates. In that city, there lived two bosom friends. One was the Prince *Sumitra* and the other was *Prabhav*, the son of a wealthy merchant. They were like a flower and its fragrance. The two friends were always found together. They could not bear to be away from each other. In their boyhood, they studied under the same teacher. They played together and ate food off the same plate. In accordance with the law of nature, they passed through the phase of boyhood and entered the phase of youth.

When Prince *Sumitra* was crowned king of *Mahapur*, he gave an equal place in the court to his intimate friend *Prabhav*;

and honoured him with royal decorations and titles. Just as he attained a high position and grandeur he bestowed a high position and honour on Prabhav. He shared his power and position with Prabhav. Their friendship remained unbroken in the midst of power, prosperity and grandeur. No differences or disparities appeared between them.

Once an incident occurred. A certain business magnate came to meet Sumitra. He had with him horses of excellent breeds. Each seemed to be superior to the other. His horses possessed the most excellent qualities and features. King Sumitra closely examined the horses and chose one of them which he liked most; and bought it on that very day. He sat on it; and began riding it in an extensive plain outside the city. The horse ran with the speed of wind. In a few moments, it rose from the plain and began flying through the air. King Sumitra, in order to stop it, pulled the reins; but instead of stopping, it doubled its speed. It began galloping. Leaving the boundaries of the city, it began galloping through a dense forest. Whenever Sumitra pulled the reins to stop it, it ran with greater speed. Sumitra was taken aback; and he could not at all control it. The reins broke off; and darkness seemed to have covered everything. He could not see anything; but within a short time, the horse lost its energy and spirits. The wonder was as the reins broke off, the horse slackened its speed and after running a few steps, it stopped. King Sumitra alighted from the horse. He heaved a sigh of relief and then looked around. He found that there was a small village nearby. He felt extremely hungry and thirsty; and his throat was dry. He proceeded slowly towards the village. When he went near the village he found that the village consisted of huts and cottages built of straw, sticks and dry grass. The king went and stopped before a large and neat-looking hut. The hut was neat and tidy. The front-yard of the hut was covered with earth. A beautiful young damsel stood in the yard and kept looking at the king who was a total stranger to her. Seeing that the stranger who looked fascinating was coming towards her hut she shook like a frightened deer; but soon she experienced a nameless thrill as she contemplated on the appearance of the stranger.

“Oh beautiful damsel ! Can I get water here ? I am thirsty”, the king said approaching her. She at once went into her cottage and brought cool water in a clean vessel. She gave the vessel to the king. At the same time, knowingly or unknowingly, she also surrendered her heart to him. She gave him cool water to drink; but at the same time she became infatuated with him and gave him the sweet water of love also. Sumitra’s thirst was appeased; and he was greatly pleased. Sumitra possessed a fascinating appearance. The village damsel also was beautiful like Urvashi the heavenly dancer. She was in her sweet sixteenth year. Her heart flew up like a bird into the firmament of love; and began to sing sweetly. Both were silent; but their eyes were engaged in a secret conversation. Both were wounded by the arrows of love. The damsel restrained her emotions a little; spread a mat in the shadow and by means of a sign, she requested him to be seated on it; and she went into the hut.

The king was sitting there wondering at her beauty. Then, suddenly, the head of the family came out. Actually, he was the leader and ruler of that village. There was the radiant and mystic horse. There was a stranger sitting on the mat. He felt that the stranger was a veritable god of love sitting there wearing royal robes. On seeing him, he was filled with wonder and fear. But as soon as he recognized him all his fears and doubts disappeared. He recognized King Sumitra because he as the head of his village was present in the royal court at the time of Sumitra’s coronation. So, he could at once recognize him as the king of the area. When he saw the king sitting there in front of his hut, his joy knew no bounds. He hurried towards the king; and prostrated at his feet. He made polite enquiries about his welfare; and asked him for the reason for his unexpected visit. The king narrated to him the reason for his coming to that area. He gave the king honourable and hospitable treatment, feeling greatly delighted by his arrival.

Meanwhile, the beautiful damsel whose name was Vanamala and who was the daughter of the village-head came out of the hut. She brought in a fresh plantain-leaf some fruits for the king whom she loved and with whom she had become infatuated.

Her heart was eager to render hospitality to the stranger whom she had enshrined in her heart as her god. Seeing that her father sat near him conversing with him, she shyly moved back a few steps.

The village-head addressing his daughter said, "Come here daughter. You need not hesitate. Come here and salute him. To-day, our house has become sanctified by his arrival. He is our king. Probably, you do not know him. He is king Sumitra, the ruler of our kingdom".

Vanamala was not amazed at what her father said about him. She had already tested him on the touchstone of her heart; and had enshrined him in the temple of her heart. She was now eager to surrender herself absolutely at his feet. King Sumitra ate those delicious fruits and appeased his hunger.

Vanamala's mother noticed the transformation that had come over her daughter after the arrival of the stranger. The change could not be concealed from her experienced and shrewd eyes. Noticing that her daughter had fallen in love with king Sumitra, she thought: "If the king marries her, it will be a great good fortune to us. Vanamala will attain extraordinary prosperity and position and the bud of her life will bloom into bliss". At once, she explained her thoughts to her husband. He was delighted to hear this. He approached King Sumitra and said in a humble manner:

"My lord! By the touch of your feet, my house has become hallowed. We will be supremely happy if you will graciously accept a small presentation we wish to give you".

King Sumitra smiled and said, "Dear sir. Your treatment has greatly pleased us. Now we do not need anything".

"But my lord! We wish to place at your feet a unique presentation".

King Sumitra guessed what the village-head desired to say. Just then, he placed his daughter's hand in the king's hand. Taking Vanamala with him, he returned to his capital riding on the same horse.

Strange are the ways of fortune ! Buying the horse, riding it to test it; going into a dense forest; meeting Vanamala there; and marrying her were all unexpected and unforeseen circumstances. Sometimes, people get more than what they hope for; and sometimes their hopes are shattered and frustrated. Such are the ways of this world.

King Sumitra entered his palace with Vanamala. In the palace, all had been shocked and stunned by the king's disappearance. They were agitated by various fears and doubts. Especially, Prabhav's condition was the most miserable. He was in deep anguish. Separated from his friend, he could not take food and drink; and he could not sleep; but when he saw the king riding towards the palace, with an unknown young lady, he was greatly delighted and elated.

Soon after arriving there, Sumitra embraced Prabhav; and narrated to him all that had taken place in the forest. Prabhav was greatly delighted to hear the story. He glanced at Vanamala; but as if it was a mockery of fate, he became infatuated with her as soon as he saw her. Passion rose in his heart and filled him to the brims of his being. At once, he went away to his residence; but only his body moved away; not his mind. His mind and heart kept hovering over Vanamala in a frenzy of passion; and infatuation. His mind and heart were caught in the coils of her beauty. Eventhough he tried his best he could not restrain his infatuation for Vanamala, the wife of his friend. Again and again, Vanamala's fascinating form rose before his mental eyes like a heavenly damsel; bathed him in the nectar of love and danced before him in all her grace and splendour. She rose thus in the form of a resplendent vision before his inner eyes. As time passed, his infatuation for her grew intenser. He became completely ensnared in the coils of his passion for her. Thinking of her whom he could not attain, he began to wither away like a fallen flower. His face which was formerly radiant was now black and bleak with anguish. Yet, he went daily to the royal court; as a matter of routine; sat conversing with Sumitra; but he did all this mechanically. King Sumitra was greatly worried when he saw that his dear friend, Prabhav was

in some deep agitation. Even the beautiful damsel Vanamala could not relieve King Sumitra's agitation though she tried her best to cheer him up. She was unable to do anything to help him to recover his spirits. She knew that her husband's anguish was caused by the inexplicable sickly condition of his friend, Prabhav; but she could do nothing in this regard. Whenever King Sumitra asked Prabhav to tell him the cause for his anguish, he used to be silent or he used to give some false reason or he used to give evasive replies to change the topic of their conversation. This did not satisfy Sumitra; nor could he bear with the condition of his friend. At last, Sumitra made a strong determination to discover the secret cause of his friend's anguish.

"Dear friend, Prabhav! You must tell me to-day what exactly is the cause for your grief and what is the cause for your maintaining such a distance. Am I not your intimate friend? Have we not shared our hearts' inmost secrets? What is causing such anguish to you that you keep languishing thus day and night?" Taking his head into his lap affectionately Sumitra said while they two were resting on the same cot.

Prabhav's dress had become soiled and unclean. For some days, he had not even taken a bath. His eyes and cheeks had become sunken. The garden of his heart had become bleak and blighted. He was silent. He could not even look straight into the eyes of Sumitra.

"Prabhav! You are not physically ill. You are suffering from some mental malady. Something has been causing this anguish to you".

"Dear friend! What you say is true." Prabhav said with great grief, breaking the silence.

"What is the matter? Please tell me".

"I cannot speak of it to you".

"You are not going to speak to any stranger; you are going to speak to me, your dearest friend. You know our hearts are like

one single heart. Tell me what has been worrying you. I will do whatever I can to relieve you of your worry”.

“Dear friend ! Do not insist upon knowing it. It is not fit to be revealed to you. If I speak of it to you, it will cause a stain on my honour; and I will be taken for a treacherous person”.

“Dear friend ! I wonder why you are speaking thus. Until you tell me what has been worrying you, I will not move from here. I will not take food and drink until you tell me what it is. From our childhood we have been together. We ate together; and we slept together. But even after all these years, you have not understood me thoroughly. Have you at least glanced at me, these days ? Have you seen my condition ? Do you see how run down I am ? Dear friend ! I am grieved by your grief; and agitated by your anguish. I am prepared to cast away and sacrifice my kingdom and my life if that can help to relieve you of your grief”; and Sumitra’s throat was choked. The tears began to flow from his eyes.

“Dear King ! What can I say ? I am unable to find words to say it; but since you have been so greatly insisting upon knowing it, I will tell you what it is. Dear friend ! The moment I cast my eyes upon Vanamala, I felt greatly drawn towards her. She has captivated me. I admire her, and I am unable to live without her”.

“Oh my friend ! So this is all you desire ! And for this trivial matter you were about to die. Not only Vanamala; I am prepared to give up the whole world for your sake. From to-day, Vanamala shall be yours !”

What a deep and blind friendship ! Sumitra got ready even to give up his dearest wife for the sake of his friend. What a blind love ! On account of his love for his friend, he gave away his beloved to Prabhav. Then, he proceeded straight to the palace of Vanamala.

Noticing her lord coming to her chamber unexpectedly, Vanamala stood up. Sumitra sat upon the cot. Vanamala sat upon the ground at her husband’s feet.

"Dearest ! To-day, I am going to test your love for me", Sumitra said, having been silent for a few moments.

"My lord ! I am ready to face any test at your hands. Love shines brightest only when it is tested with the touchstone; only then will its true lustre become evident; and only then does its radiance increase". Vanamala said in a humble manner, speaking with overflowing love for her husband.

"Then why delay ? You go to my friend, Prabhav and live with him fulfilling his desires".

"I humbly abide by your wish ! You are the lord of my life; and I have no other desire than to act according to your wishes".

And within a short time, she wore colourful garments and ornaments and went away to the house of Prabhav.

Dense darkness had enveloped the earth. Nothing was visible in that darkness. Only stars twinkled in the sky giving out a dim light. Prabhav's palace also was completely enveloped in the darkness. There was no stir or noise anywhere. Lights were burning in the house. Prabhav was walking to and fro lost in deep thought in his chamber. There was only a dim light in his chamber. Countless thoughts and feelings were rising in his mind. He was walking up and down in deep agitation. Sometimes, he looked about and again he began walking to and fro. Just then, he heard a slight sound at the door of his sleeping chamber; and then he noticed Vanamala walking in with noiseless steps. The noise of her anklets seemed to wake up from a long sleep.

"Who are you ? Why have you come at this time ?"

"Vanamala !"

On hearing her tender voice, Prabhav was startled. For a few moments he stood still and motionless like a stone image. He felt as if the four walls of his room, the ground beneath his feet and the whole chamber were reeling round and round.

"The king has dedicated me to you kindly accept me".

“But you are the King’s wife”.

“My husband’s word is precious to me. I consider his word as the word of the Almighty. To relieve the anguish of his dear friend he is prepared to give up his kingdom, his wealth and grandeur. When that is so it is not a difficult thing for him to give up a poor slave like me”.

Prabhav’s eyes were unable to see anything. A dark cloud seemed to have blocked his eyes. He felt as though he was falling from the sky to earth. He stood stupefied for a moment. He stood silent and motionless like an image of ice, hard and cold. His heart melted away.

“Why are you so apathetic ? My ...”

“Enough. Please stop saying it. Mother ! Please stop saying it”. Prabhav became unconscious and sank upon his cot. When a short while later he recovered his consciousness he began to weep like a child. He covered his face with his hands and sobbed. His voice became choked with emotion. With a hoarse voice he said :

“Fie upon my life ! Fie upon my existence ! I curse myself. My friend is heroic, patient and large-hearted. His feeling of love is unshakable like the Himalayas. What am I but a worm compared to him ? What am I but a week, feeble-minded creature ? One may sacrifice one’s life for the sake of others but not his beloved wife. What a great man he is ! How stupendous is his magnanimity; and how mean I am; and to please me he has sacrificed his beloved who was everything to him ! Actually, I am a low, mean, petty creature.... I am, indeed, a sinner. I am a wicked fellow and there is no word of abuse or curse that can be used to condemn me who am a low-minded worm. A mean fellow like me may say anything and may ask for anything. He has been a great benefactor to me all these days. He has bestowed every grace and favour upon me”.

Having said this he fell into silence. He thought deeply for a while. He was completely out of his wits. He said :

“Mother ! You kindly go back from here. Even by a mistake, you should not see my stained face again. You should not speak a single word to me”, and like a child Prabhav wept and sobbed. His sobs ended; and he fell upon his cot again unconscious.

King Sumitra had come there following Vanamala. He stood behind the door of the chamber and overheard the entire conversation. Seeing the change that had come about in Prabhav and the noble feelings that had arisen in his heart, King Sumitra was overwhelmed with joyful emotions. His love for his friend became deeper than ever. He stepped forward to embrace his friend but suddenly he stopped and stood like a stone-image motionless and silent. But that was only for a moment. Then he went in.

Prabhav sent way Vanamala through the backdoor of his chamber; then he took out his sword from its sheath which had been hung to the wall and lifted it to cut off his own head. At once, King Sumitra ran upto him and with all his strength seized the sword from him.

“My dear friend ! What an enormity are you committing?”

“My dear king ! This is what is fit for me. Please do not come in my way. Please give that sword to me. I deserve this punishment. I must punish myself. I must atone for my blunder”.

“But where is the need to die ? Why should you commit suicide. Is death the only punishment for a mistake ? Is there no other punishment ?”

“Please let me die”.

“No, Prabhav, as long as I alive I will not allow you to kill yourself under any circumstances”. With a palpitating heart and with his eyes full of despair, he looked at the majestic face of his friend; embraced him and began weeping bitterly. King Sumitra also embraced him affectionately. Gradually Prabhav's anguish abated. His weeping ceased. He recovered his spirits, some time later; and then King Sumitra returned to his palace.

The wheel of time kept turning endlessly. The river of their friendship kept flowing ceaselessly. They carried on the administration of the Kingdom ably. Unknown to themselves they had passed through the phase of prime and had become old men. King Sumitra renounced life and he became a Sadhu.

By means of renunciation and self-sacrifice, he attained an extraordinary self-purification. Sacrifice without renunciation may increase the period of a man's existence in Samsar and renunciation devoid of self-sacrifice is transitory. Self-sacrifice is necessary to retain and maintain the spirit of renunciation. In the same manner, renunciation is necessary in order to enjoy the fruits of self-sacrifice.

After his death, King Sumitra became the Indra of the heavenly world called *Ishan*. Ravan heard with deep concentration this story that Prince Madhu had narrated to him.

"After that what did the divine being tell you?" Ravan asked eagerly.

"The *Ishanendra* lived for a long time in extraordinary prosperity, peace and felicity. After the span of his life ended there, he was born in this world, in the city of Mathura as a son of King Harivahan and I am he".

"Oh ! So that divine being narrated to you this story of your previous life". Ravan looked greatly pleased.

"But who was that divine being ? Did he not tell you who he was ?" Ravan asked him eagerly.

"Yes, sir, Prabhav, after his death kept wandering through the, *Samsar*. In one life (*Janma*) he carried out extraordinary austerities and became a "*Chamarendra*". By means of his extrasensory perception he remembered the past life. Impelled by his love for me he came to Mathura. He narrated the whole story to me and as a token of his affection for me he presented this weapon called *Shula* to me". Prince Madhu said ending his narration.

“What is the speciality of this weapon ?” asked Vibhishan who was sitting nearby.

“This weapon when it is thrown travels two thousand *Yojanas* (One *Yojana* = about 8 miles) and comes back after carrying out its task”.

On hearing all this, Ravan was immensely pleased with Madhu. He gave his daughter Manorama in marriage to him and bestowed upon him his heartiest benedictions.

Eighteen years had passed since Ravan had left Lanka.

XVI

THE ETHICAL EXCELLENCE OF RAVAN

Ravan reached the peaks of the Mount Meru with his followers and his army. He experienced extraordinary delight when he visited the Jin temples situated in the forest called Pandukvan; and when he worshipped the Jin's images there. The temples were remarkable for their architectural and sculptural designs. They had sky-high towers and the walls and pillars as well as the towers were carved with magnificent designs and pictures which showed the vision and genius of those artists. Ravan organized worship accompanied with music, in those temples. He performed the worship with great devotion spending large amounts of money; and he earned great merit (*Punya*). After the worship was over, he went with his followers to a peak of the Suvarnachal to take rest there. They sat on that peak, taking rest.

"Indeed today the worship of the Lord was grand! How elated I feel!" Ravan's heart felt elated at the thought of the worship of the Lord that he had carried out.

"Brother! Today, our devotion for the Paramatma and our worship have filled us with great joy", Vibhishan said endorsing Ravan's opinion.

"Brother Vibhishan! What other greater duty than this can we carry out? In fact, again and again, I feel that I should give up all my responsibilities and spend all my life in the Jin temples". Ravan said expressing his innate aspiration.

Just then, a secret emissary came there. He folded his hands and saluted Ravan; and then going near him, he whispered something into his ears. Ravan at once, became serious. Thinking a little, he stood up. Then, he proceeded towards his tent. Kumbhakarna, Vibhishan, Sugriv and Khar also followed him. When all of them had joined him, he said, in a grave voice :

“Kumbhakarna !”

“Dear brother !”

“We should at once set off to Durlangpur; and capture Nalkuber”.

“Lord ! what is there to think about in this ? As soon as you give your commands we shall set off”. Kumbhakarna said cheerfully.

“Dear brother ! You need not proceed to Durlangpur. We shall go and rout him”. Vibhishan said observing the changing expressions on the face of Ravan. He knew that Ravan desired to stay on the Meru for some more time; and that he wanted to spend some time in worshipping the Paramatma.

“In that case, auspicious plans are to be carried out at once. Get ready for the journey”.

And within a short while, Ravan's vast army marched towards Durlangpur.

Actually, Ravan had set off on his march of victory with the determination to defeat and rout King Indra of Ratanupur. But he also desired to subjugate the Kings ruling over other Kingdoms, on the way. Nalkuber was an important organ of the artificial administration that Indra had established in imitation of Devendra's administration; and was also the ruler of one direction. He was reputed to be an intelligent and courageous King. Through his spies, he came to know that Ravan's vast army was marching towards his Kingdom to invade it. Therefore, he used his miraculous power called *Ashali*; and created a wall of fire around his capital, Durlangpur. At the same time,

he also installed on the fortifications some magical and monstrous machines which sent out fiery fulminations. He got ready for a war and was hiding himself in his fort with a large army. The Rakshasa army under the command of Kumbhakarna laid a siege to the fort; but he burst forth angrily seeing that Durlangpur was protected by a fort of fire.

“Vibhishan !”

“Yes, brother !”

“Nalkuber seems to be a cunning fellow. He is a mischievous rogue ! I am unable to think of any way by means of which we can cross this fire and enter the city; and occupy it”.

“Brother ! Already I told you about such a possibility. To-day, our intelligence is put to the test;” Vibhishan said, making a joke.

“Please keep quiet ! This is not a time for jokes”. He was greatly irritated. At once, he sent for the great heroes like Sugriv and Khar; and held discussions with them regarding the way by which they could gain entry into the city. They carried out their discussion for a long time but they could not think of any method. Kumbhakarna began to fret in anger. But nobody could think of any method by which they could enter the city. Vibhishan wore a clean dress and sat in his tent meditating deeply on the Paramatma. Kumbhakarna was enraged. He went in search of Vibhishan and when he found him sitting in meditation his anger shot up like a flame. He said in a thundering voice.

“I say ! You great devotee ! Have you come here to fight a war or to practise your hypocrisy. Ah ! What shall I say ?”

“What is the matter brother ?” Vibhishan said with a smiling face.

“My head is breaking into pieces with worry and here you have become a devotee. Please tell me if there is a way”.

“You are the supreme commander of the army. You must find out the way”.

“You stop your jokes. What shall we do now ? You tell us that; otherwise, we have to stay here for years eating and sleeping without understanding the villainous tricks of Nalkuber”.

“My suggestion is that you should at once send a messenger to Suvarnachal and convey to Ravan information regarding the situation here. Then we shall see what will happen”.

“Oh you foolish fellow ! If we have to send for our brother Ravan there was no point in my coming here at all. No brother, No. Under any circumstances I am not prepared to do anything that brings us disgrace”.

“What disgrace is there in this ? It is not at all disgraceful for a younger brother to bow to his elder brother and to seek his help. In fact, if we do so his love for us only grows more strong”.

Soon, they sent a messenger to the Meru mountain. The messenger travelled to Meru mountain at a great speed. Ravan was spending his time happily in carrying out devotional activities in the Jin temples there.

The messenger conveyed to Ravan the news about the situation at Durlangpur. Ravan was angered to hear about the villainous tricks of Nalkuber. He said in an angry voice :

“He is a coward ! Stop prattling. I will set off at once to Durlangpur”.

Ravan by nature could not bear to hear any news about the greatness of others; and when he heard the messenger speak of the greatness of his enemy his words pierced his heart like poisoned arrows.

At once, Ravan sat in his *Pushpak Viman* with his followers and reached Durlangpur. At once, he sent for the great heroes like Kumbhakarna, Vibhishan, Sugriv and Khar to discuss the situation with them. He understood from them the entire situation and began thinking of the way of entering the city. Even after a long discussion he could not come to a decision. He was

tired of thinking. He could not see any way out of the difficulty. Of his one thousand powers which he had gained there was not even one which could counteract the efficacy of *Ashali*. His face grew gloomy. Deep silence prevailed everywhere. Nobody could think of any plan. This kind of difficult situation had arisen for the first time. Ravan had no solution to this problem.

Just then, a beautiful damsel entered the chamber. She possessed extraordinary physical beauty. All turned their eyes towards her. She came forward and politely bowed to Ravan. Then, she said in a soft but resonant voice.

“Oh you King of Lanka My mistress, Uparambha the Queen-consort of Nalkuber has sent a message to you”.

“What is the message ? Please speak out without any hesitation”. Ravan said in a grave voice wondering what the message was.

Seeing that the damsel was hesitating to convey the message, Ravan said again.

“Please give me the message. All these are my trusted friends. You need not fear anything”.

“My lord ! On hearing about your heroism, valour, magnanimity, incomparable beauty and your extraordinary achievements our Queen Uparambha has fallen in love with you”.

“Then?”

“She is desirous of meeting you in a secret place”. The beautiful damsel said making her idea clear...

“Oh you King of Lanka ! You need not worry about anything. When you meet her she will teach you the secret of the power called *Ashali* which is now protecting Durlangpur. She will also reveal many other secrets to you by means of which you can achieve your objectives. You will destroy Durlangpur and you will be able to imprison Nalkuber. After that you will succeed in attaining a divine weapon called *Sudharshan Chakra*

here". On hearing the words of the beautiful young lady, Ravan's face became cheerful. He glanced towards Vibhishan.

Ravan was smiling at the ununderstandable mysteries of the hearts of women but Vibhishan understood it in a different sense and made a sign with his hand and said at once,

"We are agreeable to this plan". The beautiful young lady, at once, went away from there.

But Ravan was red with anger. He said furiously

"Oh Vibhishan ! What have you done by giving your consent to this plan ? You have brought disgrace upon our illustrious royal dynasty. You have ruined all the achievements I have made so far".

"But brother".

"Shut up. Do not say anything more. Has anyone born in our family desired the company of another man's wife ? Has anyone of our dynasty shown his back to the enemy and run away from the battle-field ? Such a thing has not happened in our illustrious line. It has not happened in the past and it shall not happen in the future but today you have stained the name of our family. I do not know why you told her so and what ideas occurred to you".

Vibhishan was greatly shocked. He wondered why Ravan had glanced towards him with a smile on his lips. He thought, "Have I misunderstood him. What a mess have I created ? All right, what had to happen has happened ?"

So he sat silently. When Ravan had grown a little calm, he said in a polite voice

"Dear brother ! I have committed an unpardonable blunder. I will never commit such a blunder again. Let Uparambha meet you. You learn from her the secret of this power which is called *Ashali*. First, let us capture our enemies. Then, we shall see what we have got to do. At present, we should think of achieving our objectives".

“Then what shall we do ?”

“You are intelligent. You adopt some trick and send her back”.

“Oh ! what a suggestion !” A smile appeared on Ravan’s serious face.

How stainless and noble was Ravan’s character ! When Vibhishan suggested that he should achieve his objective not exactly by developing intimacy with another man’s wife but only by means of political diplomacy, Ravan chid him. He did not endorse his opinion. Ravan did not like to achieve a victory over his enemy by making use of the infatuation of a woman. Therefore, he rejected that suggestion.

Vibhishan was a man of sharp intelligence with which he could perform wonders. He appeased Ravan who was furious. This is cleverness. By means of his cleverness he changed a dangerous situation into a happy one.

While the two brothers were engaged in a conversation, Uparambha the queen of Nalkuber came there decorating herself with the choicest garments and ornaments. As soon as she entered the chamber it was permeated with the heavenly splendour of her beauty. She went straight to Ravan and stood before him. She kept glancing at him passionately showing her infatuation through her glances. She said :

“Oh King of Lanka ! I have come here to surrender myself to you. I will teach you the secret of *Ashali* and then you will be able to enter the city easily. You will be able to defeat Nalkuber and then you will accept my love and marry me”.

Ravan became cautious. He did not say anything disagreeable. Uparambha went a few steps forward and taught him the *Ashali* power. She also gave him many divine weapons of miraculous powers. Ravan displayed such a feeling on his face that he seemed to be willing to accept her love.

Vibhishan ordered his soldiers to blow the trumpets and to beat the battle-drums. The sound of the battle-drums and the

trumpets which seemed to crack the skies revived the spirits of the Rakshasa warriors who were in deep despair. Within the twinkling of an eye, the Rakshasa army was moving about with renewed spirits creating a tremendous commotion. Ravan extinguished the fires by means of his power and entered Durlangpur. Nalkuber fought against him risking his life but in the battle he was not successful. Vibhishan captured him. Just then Ravan attained the *Sudharshan chakra*, there.

Ravan and Nalkuber came to a compromise according to which Nalkuber accepted Ravan's overlordship. After this he was allowed to go back to Durlangpur. When, after the war ended Ravan returned to his tent, he found Uparambha waiting impatiently for him. Making a sign to him to follow her, she took him into a secret chamber.

As if he knew nothing, he said :

"Lady ! Where are you taking me to ?"

"Oh King of Lanka ! You have promised to fulfil my desire. Have you forgotten it so soon ?"

"Oh you mad woman ! Can such a promise ever be given and can such a promise ever be kept up ?"

"That means ?"

"What is the use of your being shocked thus ? Have you ever thought of your character and status ? Have you thought of your position ?" Ravan said in a serious tone.

"But I !"

"No. No. This is not right. You have to be loyal to your husband. Especially for a queen like you this is the first duty".

Hearing the words of Ravan Uparambha was greatly disappointed. Her condition was pitiable. She could not say anything; nor could she restrain her passion for Ravan. Ravan, after pausing a little spoke in a tender and affectionate manner :

“Noble lady ! You have taught me the great *Ashali mantra*. Therefore, you are my teacher. It will be a great sin even if I touch you. Moreover, I always look upon other women as my mothers or sisters”.

“Oh king ! Can you being a great hero attain glory in life if you break your promise and fail to keep up your word ?” After thinking deeply about the situation she could say only this in her despair.

“Noble lady ! The truth is I have not given you any promise. It is not our policy to break our promises. We always honour our promises. Yes. Vibhishan made a sign with his hand and your attendant has mistaken it. Therefore, my prayer to you is that you should forget the past and that you should go back to your husband and live with him with a spirit of rededication and renewed loyalty. This is good for you as well as for me”.

How unyielding was Ravan ! How firm was his determination to keep off other women ! How noble were his thoughts ! Though such a beautiful and fascinating lady as Uparambha surrendered herself to him, though she insisted upon his fulfilling her desire, Ravan remained firm; and he cared for noble conduct, righteous path and his moral duty. It is really amazing that the world remembers only the darker aspect of Ravan's life forgetting the brighter and the nobler aspect. It is not fair to condemn him, thinking only of the darker aspect of his character and life ignoring the brighter aspect.

Seeing that Ravan did not yield to her soft and flattering words, Uparambha returned home. Ravan heaved a sigh of relief and felt happy for helping a lady to discard the wrong path and to pursue the right path.

Nalkuber received Ravan with all honour and hospitality and entreated him to stay in Durlangpur for sometime. But Ravan wanted to proceed and fight against the artificial Indra of Ratanupur and after defeating him he wanted to establish a unique imperialistic sway over the world of the Vidyadhars. This was his ambition. He wanted to attain fame as an emperor.

Therefore, Ravan left Durlangpur and proceeded towards Ratanupur with his vast army and followers. The news of the fall of Durlangpur spread like wild fire and reached Ratanupur. At the same time, it was rumoured that Ravan's next aim was Ratanupur. Yet Indra, the King of Ratanupur was not worried. He had no anxiety of any kind. But his father, Sahastrar was greatly worried by the terrible prospect of Ravan's invasion. Sahastrar who was old and experienced sent for his son, Indra. Indra, at once, went to his father; saluted him with respect and sat near him on a throne :

Placing his hand on the shoulder of Indra, Sahastrar said in a grave voice :

"Dear son ! Today, I have to tell you a very important thing. I want to speak to you about a matter of great importance".

"Dear father ! Kindly tell me whatever you want to say without any worry".

"Dear son ! I know very well that in heroism and valour no one in this world can equal you, let alone surpassing you. Moreover, you have undoubtedly made our dynasty and country prosperous and great by destroying and ruining some kings and royal dynasties. By means of your extraordinary heroism you have achieved this progress".

"Dear father ! I have made all these achievements only by the strength of your blessings and my"

"Indra ! Really you are a man of extraordinary merit (*Punya*) and you have achieved extraordinary things. On account of you we have achieved all kinds of prosperity, grandeur and happiness; but my son",

"But what ? Please speak out clearly what you want to say without hesitation while speaking to your son :

"This is not the time to display your heroism and valour. Those days are gone. The time has come for you to employ diplomatic measures to achieve success".

“Dear father ! I am unable to understand what you are saying”, Indra said with a little excitement.

“Dear Son ! Even now it is not too late. Awake and be cautious. You speak always of wars and wars. What do you attain by means of wars ? Sometimes, even the greatest heroes face defeat, disgrace and death and many untold miseries caught in the whirlpool of wars and political hostilities. This earth did not belong to anyone in the past; nor would it belong to anyone in the future. Mother nature gives birth to greater and greater heroes”. Sahastrar was silent for a few moments. On account of old age, he could not speak much. Indra’s eagerness increased. He desired to know his father’s innermost thoughts. Many conflicting thoughts arose in his mind.

“Dear son ! In this world, no one should think that he is the greatest hero. No one should have such a high notion of his greatness as a hero”.

“Do you mean to say that I...”

“Yes. Ravan, the King of Lanka is today the greatest hero upon the earth. His greatness as a warrior is unsurpassed. Moreover, he has attained many miraculous powers and weapons. He stopped the *Yajna* of king Maruth. He lifted the mighty mountain, *Ashtapad*. He routed Yama. He defeated and disgraced Vaishravan. He has made Sugriv the younger brother of Vali the valiant follow him like a slave. Above all, he entered Durlangpur which was impenetrable and captured the great hero, Nalkuber. He has achieved such extraordinary things and now Ravan is approaching your kingdom with his vast army. Instead of fighting against him, it will be sensible and wise on your part to receive him with due honour and hospitality and to conciliate him. Moreover, in order to have a permanent friendship and alliance with him, you should give your daughter, Rupini in marriage to him.”

Indra who was listening to his father patiently now began to roar with anger.

"Father ! This is impossible. Shall I give my daughter in marriage to one who has been an inveterate enemy of our royal line ? Under no circumstances will I do such a humiliating thing. I can breathe peacefully only after killing him in a battle. What happened to his grand-father, Mali will happen to him also. I will deal the same deadly blow to him. I can be peaceful and happy only after I have killed him in a battle; and only after he has shared his grand-father's fate. Dear father ! let not your affection for me blind you to realities. Kindly have a little patience. Don't you know your son's courage, valour and abilities ? Don't you have confidence in me ? or are you agitated by some unknown danger ?"

Just then, fear and wonder arose in all on account of the commotion among the people. At the same time, there arose a commotion in the palace also; and all were worried. Some guards came running to Indra; and said :

"Your Excellency ! Please do not delay. The vast army of Ravan, the King of Lanka has surrounded our city of Ratanupur".

Indra became furious. His anger shot up to the skies. At once, he went straight to his chamber where he held political discussions. Seeing Indra going away thus in a hurry, Sahastrar felt greatly unhappy. He visualised his prosperous kingdom being ruined and destroyed. He was greatly worried by Indra's behaviour which had been prompted by his false sense of prestige. But what could he do ? He could do nothing because the political power and the administration of the kingdom were not in his hands. They were in the hands of his son, Indra. At once, Indra sent for his ministers and held a meeting with them. He desired to know the opinion of each one of them.

"Revered Brihaspati! You please tell me what method I should adopt in this adverse situation ?

"War !" The Chief Minister said at once. He said so because he knew the nature of Indra's anger. He also knew that if any one at such a time gave some suggestion which went against his opinion, Indra would ruin him.

How selfish ! There was nothing but selfishness in this. This is the policy of safeguarding one's own interests by causing harm to others. The Chief Minister showed him the wrong path only to attain his selfish objectives. When in the life of a person sinful *Karmas* emerge to the surface, even a noble-minded person gives him wrong advice and shows him the wrong path. Even the other ministers unanimously supported the Chief Minister's opinion. Even before they had completed their discussion, the door-keeper came in; and said in a loud voice; "Victory to our King ! The ambassador sent by Ravan, the king of Lanka desires to meet you".

"Let him in," Indra said by way of a reply. Stillness and silence prevailed in the chamber. Every member desired to see the messenger; and to hear his message.

The messenger, at once, entered the chamber; and bowed to Indra : He possessed a magnetic personality, a dignified and awe-inspiring gait and had put on a fascinating dress.

Introducing himself to Indra, he said : "The great king Ravan has sent me to convey to you a secret message".

"What is the message ? Tell me soon what you have to say".

"This is the message. You must approach Ravan and give him an honourable reception. The time has come for you to accept his overlordship and imperialistic sway and you must obey his commands : All the kings in this world who are heroic, intelligent and arrogant have accepted Ravan's superiority, and have become his subordinate kings. You have not yet come under his power. That is because of his carelessness or negligence. But now the time has come to yield to him and to accept his superiority and sway".

"I see ! Ravan has become so haughty and arrogant; has he ?" Indra said with flaming anger.

"Oh king ! Now, you have only two alternatives before you. Either yield to him and accept his rule or show your strength. The man who is incapable of either devotion or valour is fit to be thrown into the jaws of death".

"Impertinent fellow! You talkative fellow! I think your king is unable to see his limits because of his false notion of his prestige. He has become haughty. Just because some weak and helpless kings have accepted his overlordship he seems to imagine himself to be the supreme emperor of the world. Probably, he fancies himself to be the only capable ruler in the world. And now he desires to subjugate me and make me his subordinate without realizing who I am and what my powers are. Probably, he has forgotten that I defeated and slew his grand-father, Mali. Till now, Ravan has been living in peace and prosperity but now by provoking me he has provoked his cruel fate. Get away from here; go and tell your master either to yield to me and become my slave or to show his strength in the battle. But, of course, if he fights against me, it will not take much time for him to lick the dust. If a valiant man bears with another man's haughtiness, how can he be a valiant man?"

The messenger returned to Ravan's tent. He narrated to Ravan what Indra had said. Dashmukh Ravan's face became red with anger. At once, he commanded his officers to proclaim war.

As soon as he gave his commands the battle-drums were beaten and bugles were blown. The surroundings shook with the noise of the battle-drums and bugles. Ravan's vast army invaded Ratanupur.

Indra also got ready for a war against Ravan.

Within a few moments, the land of Ratanupur became a battle-field.

Seated on his *Iravan*, Indra marched into the battle-field. Ravan also sat on his magnificent elephant *Bhuvanankar* and was impatient to fight against Indra's army. The infantry of Ravan fought terribly against Indra's infantry. Cavalry fought against cavalry. On account of the terrible war the whole atmosphere became dreadful. On account of the ferocious war, every atom of the earth shook. There was a continuous rain of sharp arrows. Mother earth was bathed in the blood of heroes and was covered with dead bodies and severed heads and limbs.

The ambitious actions of a power-monger throw thousands of people into the bottomless abyss of death and destruction.

Bhuvanalankar sped towards *Iravan*. Within a few moments, Ravan and Indra were face to face, in the battle-field. In the beginning, of course, the two elephants began fighting with their massive trunks. They attacked each other with their pointed and adamantine tusks. As a result of this, blood began to flow down the temples of both the elephants. In the same manner, Indra and Ravan pounced upon each other not caring for their lives; and dealt deadly blows to each other. They fought against each other with arrows, maces, dumb-bells and spears.

When they found that they could not attain victory by using such ordinary weapons, they began to use supernatural weapons. Each began to release supernatural weapons after reciting the relevant *mantras* : Yet Ravan could not defeat Indra. He felt a little powerless finding that all his supernatural devices were also powerless against Indra. Ravan glanced towards Sugriv. It did not take much time for Sugriv to realise that it was difficult to defeat Indra by those methods; so going near Ravan, he whispered something into his ears.

Accordingly, Ravan went a few steps forward and when he got an opportunity, he leaped on to the back of the elephant *Iravan*. With one stroke he cut off the head of the mahaut and without losing a single moment, he held Indra tightly; and took him captive.

Ravan carried out this plan with lightning speed; and so, Indra had no time to retaliate. On seeing that Indra was captured, his soldiers began to run away from the battle-field. The Vidyadhar heroes remained helpless and woefully frustrated. Ravan took Indra and his elephant *Iravan* to his camp. The Rakshasa warriors were greatly elated; and began dancing and singing, drinking and revelling with exultation and jubilation. Ravan, in consequence, became the emperor of the Vidyadhar world.

Without wasting even a moment in Ratanupur Ravan returned to Lanka with his captive, Indra.

The people of Lanka received their King Dashmukh Ravan with jubilations and celebrations. Large masses of people gathered on the sides of the roads to watch Ravan's triumphant return to his capital. In the chariot, Kumbhakarna and Vibhishan sat on his sides. He sat between them. All the people felt supremely elated when they saw the invincible Ravan and felt that his victory was their victory. Women and girls showered flowers upon him and sang auspicious songs.

A grand celebration was arranged in Lanka. The people forgot themselves in dancing and singing.

The captive Indra was put in a cage; was taken in a procession through the roads and streets of Lanka and then he was imprisoned.

On hearing that Indra had been imprisoned, Sahastrar was greatly grieved. He became despondent and bewildered. His love for his son made him mentally upset and almost mad; therefore, in order to get his son released from captivity he set off with his family on a journey to Lanka.

How strange are the effects of *Karma*? The aged Sahastrar who was one foot in the grave, on account of his affection for his son had to go to Lanka to get his son released.

"Your Excellency! Sahastrar, the father of Indra has come from Ratanupur and seeks your permission to meet you". The door-keeper entered the courtyard and said to Ravan in a polite and humble manner.

"Let him come in", Ravan gave his permission.

The aged Sahastrar came in with great difficulty, placing his steps slowly. He entered the court of Ravan and bowed to Ravan with great humility. Ravan received him with due honour and offered him a proper seat. Of course, Sahastrar sat down but his eyes were full of grief caused by the separation

from his son. In his heart, there was great anguish. His face had become completely withered. His body was shaky. He said in a humble voice.

“Oh King ! I have come to your doors to beg for my son's release. I am not at all ashamed of begging you for this favour. Why should any one feel ashamed of begging a favour from a superhuman hero who has with ease lifted the Ashtapad mountain ? Oh, you King of Lanka ! I do not seek anything else from you. Kindly, release my son from captivity and send him with me”.

Ravan was silent for a while. For a few minutes he was lost in deep thoughtfulness. Then, he said in an elevated voice.

“Revered Sahastrar ! I am absolutely ready to release Indra but you will have to satisfy certain conditions”.

“Kindly tell me what those conditions are”, said Sahastrar eagerly when he saw a ray of hope shining out.

“These are the conditions which are to be fulfilled. He will have to do menial jobs in our city with his Dikpalakas (Governors of the various directions);

*They will have to clean the lanes and roads of Lanka;

*They will have to sprinkle water on the roads of Lanka;

*They will have to make garlands of flowers and bring them to the temple. And they will also have to do such menial tasks as I command them to do. Do you agree to these conditions ?”

On hearing the conditions put forth by Ravan Sahastrar fell into deep thoughtfulness. His agitation and grief knew no bounds. He did not know what he should do. He wondered what he should do in such a situation. There arose before him a strange problem. If his son had to be released, he would have to do low and menial jobs. He wondered whether his son would agree to this. If he did not get his son released he would have to suffer terrible anguish and die in great sorrow. He thought for a few moments; then he came to a decision. He agreed to fulfil Ravan's conditions. Accordingly, Indra was released by Ravan. Sahastrar returned to Ratanupur taking Indra with him.

XVII

INDRA'S EXIT

In the present age many people are ready to sacrifice their self-respect and character in order to get on in this world. Probably, such people may not believe that there was an age in the past when people preferred death to disgrace and were ready to die in order to safeguard their status and self-respect. They died cheerfully to safeguard their character and self-respect. For the sake of safeguarding their self-respect and honour, they sacrificed their lives. Such a magnificent tradition existed once.

Of course, the father Sahastrar impelled by the affection for his son approached Ravan and got Indra released from Ravan's prison-house but eventhough he had been released Indra had no peace of mind. When his self-respect had been torn to pieces, continuing to exist in this world was more painful to him than death itself. After returning to Ratanupur, Indra was always to be seen in a mood of depression. He never conversed with anyone. He seemed to be brooding over something deeply. He did not mix with others and did not enjoy eating, drinking or talking jocularly in their company. He was alone in his chamber always thinking deeply, bearing the burden of existence with great difficulty. Just at that time, once a guard of the forest brought the news that a great Muni who was serene like the moon and radiant like the sun had come to the garden outside the city. Indra was a little startled and said : "What is his name ?"

"Nirvanasangam".

"Oh ! How beautiful the name is ! He who has united his life with Nirvan is a *Nirvan Samgam*. Beautiful ! Really beautiful !"

Giving a gift to the guard; he sent him away. Then, he got ready to go and meet the Muni. He thought that going alone would be proper from all points of view, because he wanted to discuss with the enlightened Muni the problem that was agitating him.

When he entered the garden, he found the great Muni seated in meditation, at a clean place. He was carrying out meditation in that place of solitude. Indra swayed with delight on seeing him. The face of the Muni was radiant with many great virtues that seemed to be shining through it. His unexampled spiritual effulgence was beaming forth through his face. Bowing to him with devotion, he sat at the feet of the great Muni.

"Oh lord ! Is there any solution to my problems ?" Indra asked him after his meditation was over.

"Oh king ! Surely they can be solved", the Muni Nirvan-sangam said in a voice that was more majestic than the roll of the ocean.

"Man attains happiness; he has also to suffer anguish. What is the secret of this ?"

"Dear son ! There is no great secret behind it. Happiness and sorrow result from the *Punya* (merit) and *Papa* (sins) committed by man in his previous lives."

"Dear lord ! If the humiliation that Ravan inflicted upon me is the result of the sins I committed in my earlier lives, kindly tell me when and in which *Janma* I committed those sins".

The atmosphere in the garden was permeated with the sweet fragrance of flowers. Birds were singing melodiously. The atmosphere was reverberating with the voices of the Sadhus who were carrying out scriptural studies. Within a few moments

the Muni again entered deep meditation. With deep concentration, he began to visualize the past lives of Indra. He opened his eyes; and began narrating the story of Indra's previous life.

Once, there was a beautiful and prosperous city by name Arinjaypur. A heroic king by name Jwalan Simha was ruling over it. His wife was queen Vegavati, a woman of extraordinary virtues.

In course of time, a daughter was born to them. They named her Ahilya. They brought her up with great affection. As she grew up, her body also bloomed like a beautiful flower. When she entered the threshold of youth, she was so beautiful and fascinating that even the divine damsels Rambha and Urvashi would feel ashamed of their beauty which was inferior to hers. She possessed angelic beauty. When she reached the age of marriage, Jwalan Simha arranged a *Swayamvar*; and invited kings and princes of various countries and the Vidyadhars. In consequence, a large number of kings, princes and Vidyadhars came to attend the *Swayamvar*. Among them there were such mighty heroes as King Anandmati of the city of Chandravarth and King Tadi-prabha of the city of Suryavarth. These two kings were confident of winning the hand of the princess. Each of them believed that she would garland him in the *Swayamvar*.

Really, the ways of infatuation are queer. It ensnares *Jivas* and casts them into the abysmal depths of sorrow. At the time of the *Swayamvar* princess Ahilya observed all the invitees and finally garlanded King Anandmali of the city of Chandravarth. But thinking that he had been ignored and slighted, Tadi-prabha became furious.

The Mahamuni continued his narration pointing his hand at Indra : "Oh King ! you are that king Tadi-prabha".

And then, pausing for a few moments, he continued : "King Tadi-prabha entertained jealousy, hatred and contempt for Anandmali; and returned to his capital. He had no peace of mind. How could he have peace of mind ? How can there be in the heart of any person peace and happiness when it is full of the flames of jealousy ? So, he was agitated and dispirited.

Worry and agitation consume a man like fire and consign him to the dark abode of death prematurely. A jealous man grows weaker and weaker day by day, and his mind and heart grow hard and cruel.

Anandmali married Ahilya and returned to his capital; and began to spend time happily in the company of Ahilya. In course of time, he lost interest in sensual pleasures; and began to entertain thoughts of renunciation. How long does a man retain his sensual cravings? As long as there are desires in him, his cravings also continue. When desires grow weak, cravings disappear and the spirit of detachment appears.

Once, Anandmali said to Ahilya giving expression to his thoughts :

“Dear queen! I have lost interest in wordly pleasures”. Having said this, he paused for a few moments to see what effect his words might produce on her. He tried to scrutinize her feelings closely; but no gloom or sorrow appeared on the face of Ahilya who was a woman of great nobility and purity; nor was she agitated or worried.

“I feel that I should renounce wordly life and receive initiation into the *Charitradharma* expounded by Paramatma Jineshwardev. I hope you will not feel sad if I become a sadhu.

“Oh lord of my life! Your aspiration is auspicious and sublime. This is the tradition that a Kshatriya should follow. When the proper time comes, one should renounce wordly life and spend the remainder of one's life as a sadhu. This is a noble tradition.

“But my queen! Will this action of mine affect you? Will it cause sorrow to you!”

“If I feel sad, it is my selfishness. Even I have been entertaining thoughts of renunciation. Of course, I will be sad because I have been living with you for years sharing your joys and sorrows with love and attachment for you; but I do not want my sorrow to be an impediment on your sublime path”.

"Dear queen ! Really you have understood the very heart of the *Jin Shasan*. Now I am relieved of the burden that was weighing on my heart" Anandmali's delight knew no bounds.

"I am really unfortunate because I cannot follow you. Though I have a strong desire to follow you, I cannot renounce life because if I do so, our tiny children will be like helpless orphans. Of course, this is my attachment. Destiny will take care of them." Ahilya was overwhelmed with emotions.

This was enough. Anandmali's path was now clear, and easy. On an auspicious day, he received initiation into the *Sadhudharma* from his elder brother, Muni Kalyangunadhar; and set off on his *Padyatra*.

Then Muni Anandmali began to carry out severe spiritual endeavours and penance. During his *Padyatra*, he once happened to go to the Rathavart mountain in the company of Mahamuni Kalyangunadhar. There your, that is, King Taditprabha's eyes fell upon the Muni who was in meditation. As soon as he saw him, the scene of Ahilya's *Swayamvar* appeared before him. At once, jealousy flamed out from his heart. The cobra of anger spread its hood and hissed. The bird of animosity flapped its wings in the firmament of his heart. In consequence, Taditprabha bound Muni Anandamali who was in meditation with a rope; yet the Muni did not make any movement or resistance. He remained serene, still and unshaken. Impelled by anger, Taditprabha began to thrash him. The Muni bore with all these treatments with equanimity. But the elder brother, Muni Kalyanagunadhar could not bear with this cruel behaviour of Taditprabha. In consequence, infuriated by his ignoble behaviour, he, at once, unleashed upon him his supernatural power called *Tejoleshya*, with the result that a terrible kind of fire began to burn Taditprabha.

Taditprabha had with him, his queen, Satyashri. She was a woman of great nobility and chastity. She had prevailed upon Taditprabha not to ill-treat and cause pain to a sadhu in that manner. She had tried to impress upon him that it was not at all right to cause affliction to a Muni thus. But Taditprabha

did not refrain from his evil actions. But when she saw the *Tejoleshya* released by Kalyanagunadhar entering her husband's body and causing a terrible agony to him she screamed with anguish; and, at once, ran forward; fell at the feet of the Mahamuni, Kalyanagunadhar and began weeping bitterly. Her body was shivering with anguish and tears flowed incessantly from her eyes. She entreated him to pardon her husband and to free him from the *Tejoleshya*.

The Mahamuni was an ocean of compassion. He would not bear to see this heart-rending sight. His heart melted away when he saw the anguish of Satyashri. At once, he called back the *Tejoleshya*.

Therefore, oh Indra! You escaped from the destructive power of *Tejoleshya*.. In a way, you attained a rebirth. But those enormities you committed have brought about their effect now and so as a result of those *Karmas* you have had to experience this humiliation at the hands of Ravan. Muni Nirvana-sangam narrated this story in reply to Indra's question.

On account of his having insulted and pained the Muni, Indra had to suffer disgrace and humiliation in the whole world... defeat at the hands of Ravan... dishonour in the world of the Vidyadhars and the necessity of hiding his face in shame. Such is the efficacy of *Karmas* on the *Jivas* and such is the bitter consequence of sinful *Karmas*. Sinful *Karmas* impel man to pursue the wrong path.

"Indra! This truth should never be forgotten that every *Jiva* has to experience the bitter fruits of his *Karmas*. As you sow; so you reap. One has to experience the fruit of one's *Karmas* whether one experiences it cheerfully or sorrowfully. One cannot attain liberation without experiencing one's *Karma*. But there is no such rule that one should experience in the next *Janma* the *Karmas* relating to this life. There is no such rule. The *Karmas* of this life may produce their effect several *Janmas* later. After your *Janma* as Tadiṭṭrabha you passed through many *Janmas* before you were born as Indra. But the *Karmas* you committed as Tadiṭṭrabha did not rise to the

surface in the earlier *Janmas*. They have risen to the surface in this *Janma*. This rule is applicable not only to your case. It is applicable to all *Jivas* from Devendra upto the meanest creatures like flies and mosquitoes. This is the nature of *Samsar*. As long as the soul is in the clutches of *Karmas*, this condition does not end. Therefore, in life if there is any great endeavour that the *Jiva* has to carry out, it is to try endlessly to destroy all *Karmas* and their severe bondages”.

After hearing the sublime words of the Muni and after knowing the story of his *Purvajanma*, Indra's adamant heart became soft and tender like the lotus. He shuddered at the enormities he had committed in his *Purvajanma*. As a result of this, he discarded all attachments for the external world; and he was absorbed in deep contemplation on his soul. The words uttered by the great Muni destroyed his attachments and hatred in a few moments. Throughout his life, he had not meditated on and assimilated certain ideas; and now those noble ideas began to bloom like blissful flowers, in his heart.

After having saluted the Mahamuni, he returned to the city. His eyes were moist; and his heart was an ocean in which elevated thoughts rose and rolled like waves. The words of the Muni had made him aware of his duty; and he felt inspired by those words.

Indra! The right time has come. Do not delay. Prepare yourself for the final battle to release your soul from the bondage of *Karmas*. Now, in carrying out this endeavour, show your heroism. Tear off to pieces the confounding snares of *Karmas*. Your safety and your greatness lie in this”.

At the same time, his mind which had been enveloped with and conditioned by countless ages of evil traditions said :

“Indra! You have entertained a very unwelcome idea in thinking of becoming a sadhu. You have lost all hopes just because you have been defeated once by Ravan. You have fallen into the abyss of despair. You are trying to cover up your, cowardice with the honourable-looking garment of renunciation.

Will you really get lasting peace from this ? To-day, you feel that *Samsar* is meaningless and shallow and pointless; but the same *Samsar* appeared to you attractive, fascinating and gay and flourishing, when you sat gloriously on your splendid throne”.

But his soul which had been brightened by the star of the Jin's words again said :

“Indra ! He who does not wake up and attain awareness when he has an opportunity becomes a laughing-stock in the world. *Time and tide waits for no man*. The defeat you have suffered at the hands of Ravan is only a foretaste and suggestion of the anguish that you have to suffer on account of your sinful *Karmas*. It would be better if you become aware at once. At the same time, you also remember the vital truth that even if you had attained a victory over Ravan, it would not have been permanent. No victory is permanent in this world. Even that victory would be only a gift of your good *Karmas*. Would it not be such a thing ? Just as the defeat brought about by your evil *Karmas* is terrible and agonizing, even the victory brought about by your noble *Karmas* is terrible and it is a cause of decline and ruin. That was why Vali, the valiant cheerfully turned his face away from his tremendous victory and received initiation into the *Sadhudharma*. You should not forget that it is probably easy to attain a victory over *Ravan* but it is difficult and almost impossible to attain a victory over your powerful *Karmas*. In fact, he who attains the unattainable, is called a great man. Those souls which vice's moody mists most blind cannot see this truth. You can see it and you can act upon it.

In the conflict that raged in his mind between noble thoughts and ignoble thoughts, the former were victorious. He contemplated calmly on the *Samsar* and estimated its value and meaning and decided firmly to discard all his impure thoughts, propensities and actions and began to entertain noble propensities.

He, after a careful scrutiny found that those objects of the *Samsar* which he had deemed permanent were indeed transitory and fleeting. He developed an aversion to the *Samsar*, whose refuge he had sought previously. Blinded by *Moha* infatuation he had believed that all his relatives and the members of his family were his but now he realized that they did not really belong to him and that they were alien. He realized that he was alone in the *Samsar*. Formerly, he had deep attachments for the members of his family and for his relatives; but now he developed a sense of detachment for them. The great truth *Ekoham* "I am alone" began to reverberate through his mind and heart. He began to adopt an attitude of amity for the *Jivas* against whom he had formerly animosity and hostility.

He went to the palace of his father, Sahastrar to seek his permission to become a Sadhu. Sahastrar at that time sat in meditation reciting the *Namaskar Mahamantra*. Indra approached his father, prostrated before him and said politely :

"Dear father ! I have come to obtain your consent and I am confident that you will give your consent cheerfully".

"Consent to what ?"

"To renounce the *Samsar*".

"Oh ! How shocking ! What do you mean ?" and Sahastrar's old and sunken eyes were filled with tears.

"Dear father ! I know you love me greatly. Therefore, you are prepared even to bring down to earth the moon and the stars if by doing so, you can restore peace and happiness to me; but now I have no interest in this life; in this *Samsar*. After I learnt from Muni Nirvana Sangam the real nature of the *Samsar*, I decided not to remain in the *Samsar* even for a moment. Now, I do not have any interest in the *Samsar*. The great Muni narrated to me the story of my *Purva Janma* and opened my eyes to realities; and by doing so, he destroyed my attachments, infatuation and illusion, regarding the *Samsar*. Probably, fearing Ravan you want to make me a slave to him;

and probably you desire that I should again sit on the throne of our kingdom; but I have completely, discarded the *Samsar* and I have no attachment for it”.

“Dear child ! What shall I say ? I am completely, at sea. I thought something; and what has happened is completely different from what I thought. Separated from you, I cannot exist bearing the burden of this *Samsar*. Yet, I do not want to cause grief to you. I cannot at all be happy when you are in grief”.

Indra's heart was greatly moved by his father's words. His throat was choked and he placed his head at the feet of his father :

“You will attain serenity and felicity by renouncing the *Samsar*; I shall be happy to see your felicity. Your happiness will only make me happy; but of course, on account of my affection for you, your renunciation will cause pain and grief to me but that will be only for a short time. But just because it will cause agony and anguish, to me, I do not want to place impediments on your way” Sahastrar said and overwhelmed by emotions he kept looking silently through the window and his eyes ranged upto the horizons. The tears were streaming from his eyes.

The news of Indra's decision to renounce the *Samsar* spread like wild fire. It spread to every part of the kingdom of Ratanupur. The members of the royal family, the courtiers, relatives, friends and the people of Ratanupur were greatly shocked and grieved by the news. The prominent people of the city and his relatives came thronging to see him.

Indra ordered his ministers to crown his son, Prince Dattavirya, king of the country; and began making preparations to receive initiation into the *Charitradharma*. On an auspicious day, the prince was crowned king by the court-priest. The prince was installed on the throne; and the court-priest decorated his forehead with the *Tilak*. The cry of “Victory to king Dattavirya” uttered by the people reverberated in the sky.

After the coronation was over, Indra left the palace without experiencing any pangs and came out. He prostrated to his father and obtained his blessings. He took leave of his relatives, friends and courtiers and went to the garden to meet Muni Nirvansangam. Large numbers of people went behind him. They were all grieved to see their king pursuing the path of renunciation. The tears were flowing from their eyes. Indra saluted the Gurudev humbly and entreated him to initiate him into the *Charitradharma*. Muni Nirvansangam gave the *Deeksha* to Indra and showed him the way to spiritual elevation.

In this manner, within a short time, King Indra became Muni Indra.

Meanwhile, Ravan, the King of Lanka received the auspicious news that on the Meru mountain, Maharshi Anantviraya had attained *Kevaljnan*.

Ravan was greatly delighted by the news. At once, he sat in his *Pushpak Viman* and arrived on the peaks of the Suvarnachal mountain. Already, there was an endless stream of gods and goddesses all of whom had come by supernatural airships to bestow their benedictions upon him and to congratulate him. A beautiful and resplendent lotus of gold had been made. The *Kevaljnani* was seated on it; and held all spell-bound by his sublime sermons.

Ravan saluted the Maharshi respectfully; and sat near him. The sermon that the Maharshi was delivering was flowing like nectar. His sermon was sweeter than sugar and cooler than sandal paste. There was a blessing in his gentle voice; which resounded in the souls of the listeners.

After the sermon ended, the heavenly beings sat in their airships and returned to their places. But Ravan sat silent and still. One question kept reverberating in his mind: "How am I going to die?" He was eager to know his future.

"Oh lord! You know and you can see the churning that is going on in my mind. Be so gracious as to solve my problem".

Ravan approached the Maharshi who had attained *Kevaljnan*.

The Maharshi said :

“Ravan ! You are a *Prati-vasudev* (vice-world ruler) and you will die at the hands of a Vasudev”.

“Oh lord ! What will be the cause for his slaying me ?”

“On account of your lewd desire for another man's wife”.
The great Muni said in clear words.

Ravan was greatly agitated on hearing the words of the Maharshi. In his mind which entertained noble thoughts generally, there arose a terrible war of perplexing and vexing thoughts. There arose a commotion in his mind when he heard from the Maharshi the cause for his death. He had never conceived of his dying for such a reason. He began to think. “The words of the enlightened can never be false ! Moreover, no one can prevent what has to occur. Who can escape the decree of Destiny ? Who can mitigate their severity ?

Just at that time, his innate propensity to maintain nobility in his conduct, which had lain dormant, latent but potent, spoke to him suggesting an alternative :

“The enlightened Maharshi said that my death would be caused by my lewd desire for the wife of another man. If I keep off such thoughts, I can save myself from that disaster. How can the disaster occur if I am careful to see that such a cause does not arise at all ?” Making some determination he said to the Maharshi :

“Oh lord ! I wish to take a vow at your feet that I will not enjoy a sexual union with a woman against her wish; and that I will not even touch her”. Ravan took the vow.

How careful and cautious Ravan was ! In order to prevent and block the influx of sin into his soul, Ravan built an adamant wall with a lofty vow. After having taken a vow to that effect at the feet of the Maharshi, he returned to Lanka.

XVIII

SEARCHING FOR A BRIDEGROOM

The magnificent palace built of the purest marble looked divinely resplendent in the cool and lustrous rays of the moon from whose face nectar seemed to be pouring forth. No picture of any mortal's memory ever looked so sublime. A higher power than mere fancy seemed to have invested it with that unexampled effulgence. Cool and pleasant breezes blew filling the whole atmosphere with fragrance.

At the main entrance to the palace, two sentinels stood carrying weapons and keeping a vigilant watch. The roads of the city were silent. Everywhere, deep silence and stillness prevailed. No Vidyadhars were seen moving about. All the noises of the city had subsided. The splendid city of Mahendranagar slept in a state of heavenly gaiety and inebriety and of self-contentment. The goddess of sleep held her sway over all. But King Mahendra was sleepless. For some nights, the King had not got even a wink of sleep. Sleep kept away from him completely. He was plunged in deep thoughtfulness; and kept walking to and fro in his chamber. Even for a moment he could not rest peacefully. His mind was deeply perplexed and agitated. His magnificent palace, his loving family and his incomparable wealth and royal splendour could not lessen his worries and agitations. Even his unflinching patience and invincible valour could not extinguish the fires of his agitation. Even his boundless wealth and prosperity were ineffectual in removing his mental agitation.

For sometime, he kept tossing and rolling on his bed agitated by worries and for sometime he kept walking to and fro; for some time he stood at the window and kept gazing into the incomprehensible depths of the sky; and for sometime, he kept gazing at the vast earth spread upto the horizons. His grief and agitation knew no bounds.

His deep thinking was disturbed by a sudden knock on the door of his sleeping chamber. He was startled;

"Please open the door "A voice which was tender and grief-stricken said. King Mahendra knew the voice very well. At once, he opened the door of his chamber.

As soon as the door of the chamber was opened, Queen Hridaysundari entered the chamber placing slow and noiseless steps. Her tender face had become withered. Her face had lost its brightness and cheerfulness and it looked like a withered lotus. She stood silently for a while watching the King's worried and gloomy face.

"My lord ! Has anyone been successful in his attempts today ? Did any one sent by you in search of a bridegroom bring any news ?

"Of course, every day, someone or the other brings news; but...

"But no one suitable to our daughter has been found. Is that not so ?"

"Yes," said the king heaving a deep sigh.

"A new idea has struck me".

"What is it ?"

"Please order our Vidyadhar messengers who go in search of a suitable bridegroom to bring us the pictures of the princes and all the details about them. Then, we can choose a suitable bridegroom".

"You are right. As soon as it is morning, I will give this order to the Vidyadhar assistants".

Princess Anjana had passed through girlhood and had stepped on the threshold of youth. Every organ of her body had been irradiated by the radiance of youth and had bloomed into blissful shapes like tender lotuses. From her girlhood's fount of flame surged out her life-flood streaming into buoyant youthfulness. She was the very embodiment of extraordinary beauty, elevated virtues and unexampled accomplishments. Her parents who loved her greatly were carrying out an incessant search for a suitable bridegroom, for her. The intelligent and experienced assistants and messengers of Mahendra, the king of Vidyadhars were searching for such a bridegroom, day and night. They were looking for a bridegroom who would be a suitable husband to their beautiful princess. The wheel of time was revolving fast. The King and the Queen began to fear that they might not be able to find a bridegroom who would be a suitable match to their daughter. This was the cause for the King's agitation.

The next morning, accordingly, he sent for his Chief Minister and the two held a long discussion about the subject in his chamber. The King informed his Chief Minister of what he and the queen had thought of on the previous night.

The Chief Minister liked the suggestion very much. Delighted by it he said..

"Your Excellency ! This method is really excellent. It will enable us to choose the right bridegroom easily and without any worry".

They sent for the Vidyadhar messengers, gave them the necessary orders and sent them in search of a suitable bridegroom.

Sometime passed.

One day, a Vidyadhar King who had been sent in search of a bridegroom came to King Mahendra. He bowed to the King

humbly and placed in his hands a portrait. The king and the queen observed the picture and were delighted by its winsome and attractive features. They were fully satisfied with the fascinating looks of the prince. Greatly elated with joy, they said, "Is it the picture of an actual prince or is it the magnificent creation of some great artist?"

"Your Excellency! This is not the creation of any artist. It is the portrait of a Vidyadhar prince who is renowned for his extraordinary valour and his divinely beautiful features".

King Mahendra was greatly delighted to hear this. Till now he and the queen had seen many princess and had heard all details about them but they had not liked anyone so much as they liked this prince. This portrait captivated them. The portrait was passed from hand to hand. Everyone who saw it admired it greatly. On seeing it, everyone swayed in the swing of elation. Everyone was delighted by Anjana's good fortune. An atmosphere of joy descended over the entire city. The members of the royal family, the courtiers and the people of the city were happy that a suitable bridegroom had been found. An atmosphere of elation and jubilation took the place of gloom and depression.

The next morning, the sun rose with greater splendour over the City of Mahendranagar. The heavy weight of many a weary day had ended. The King and the courtiers sat in their seats in the royal court. An official of King Mahendra entered the Court. Even he bowed to the King respectfully; and conveyed to him a portrait. The portrait had been wrapped in soft, resplendent velvet. When the king unwrapped the portrait, his eyes widened with amazement and admiration. He became spell-bound and kept watching the beautiful features of the prince who had been painted in it. Noticing the wonder and delight that had appeared in the face of the King, everyone in the court was eager to have a look at the portrait.

The King slowly passed the portrait to the Queen. The Queen saw the picture and was greatly fascinated by it. She had with her the picture, that had been received on the previous

day. She placed the two portraits side by side and began to compare them; but each surpassed the other. Each seemed to excel the other. The Queen, Hridayasundari was caught in a confounding conflict. She wondered which she should choose and which she should reject. She was in a dilemma. Unable to resolve her conflict, she placed both the portraits, in the hands of the King. The King also was in the same dilemma. He too was caught in the same conflict. Unable to do anything, he too remained still like a stone-image for sometime. Soon, the Chief Minister came to know of the conflict into which the King and the Queen had fallen. He understood the minds of the King and the Queen. He said to the official who had brought a portrait on the previous day;

“Yesterday, you brought a portrait to the court. Now, you please give us all the details you know about that prince”.

“Oh you ocean of grace ! Yesterday, I brought to the court a portrait. It is the portrait of Vidyutprabha, a Vidyadhar prince. He is the noble son of Hiranyabh, the Vidyadhar King. He is the apple of his parents’ eyes; the darling son of Queen Suman and the cynosure of all the eyes in his Kingdom. He belongs to the highest rank in beauty, birth, family, virtues and in prosperity. Even his portrait displays his incomparable grace and fascinating features. If the portrait itself is so fascinating, he should be more charming. This is more than evident. You yourself know : “The first in beauty are the first in virtues”. You can see that the prince has a countenance which radiates internal excellence. It is a perfect form, nobly planned. It is only by means of a person’s physical features that we can make out his ethical excellence. I think that is all I have got to say.” Having said this, he sat in his place.

After that, the Chief Minister made a sign and suggested to the other official of Mahendra, to give details about the portrait he had brought.

The follower stood up; bowed to King Mahendra; and began his narration.

"Your Excellency ! In the whole of the Vidyadhar world, the City of Adityapur is renowned for its extraordinary prosperity and progress. Prahlad, the Vidyadhar King of that city is famous far and near. Prahlad is a valiant and virtuous king, and his wife Queen Ketumati is the very embodiment of beauty and nobility. Prince Pavananjay is their son. He is not only a man of extraordinary heroism and valour but also an absolute master of magnificent accomplishments. This is a portrait of Prince Pavananjay. His very portrait reveals his extraordinary virtues and beautiful features. He is renowned for his incisive intelligence and invincible valour. Nature seems to have chosen the noblest day to form this young man, discarding for a while her usual way of making men out of her exhausted moulds".

Even after hearing the narrators of both the followers, the problem of the King and the Queen was not solved because between the two princes there was no disparity in respect of appearance, virtues, valour and intelligence. Each seemed to excel the other. The problem instead of getting solved became more tangled and confusing. All were silent, absorbed in deep thoughtfulness. No one could think of any solution to this problem. There was absolute silence in the court. Just then, the official who had brought the portrait of Prince Vidyutprabha stood up and said.

"Your Excellency. I have not mentioned one important point".

"What is it ?" King Mahendra said eagerly.

"Prince Vidyutprabha is a *Charamshariri* soul. That is, this is the last *Janma* of his bodily existence. Scholarly astrologers have said that he would attain *Moksha* in this *Janma*".

Compared to Pavananjay, Vidyutprabha seemed to be unique and extraordinary on account of this virtue. The Chief Minister glanced towards that official and said with the idea of knowing more details about this special virtue of Prince Vidyutprabha.

"Indeed, this speciality of Vidyutprabha is incomparably great. We admire it but did those astrologers who predicted that

Vidyutprabha would attain *Nirvan* in this *Janma*, also predict the age at which he would attain *Nirvan* ?”

“Yes sir, they predicted that also”.

“What did they say about it”.

“The astrologers said that Prince Vidyutprabha would attain *Nirvan* at the age of eighteen”.

“What did they say ? Did they say that Vidyutprabha would attain *Nirvan* in his eighteenth year ?” King Mahendra said in a sharp voice as if he had awakened from a deep sleep.

“Yes, Your Excellency ! That is what the astrologers said. There is no doubt about it”.

“Dear officer ! If you know anything about the life-span of Prince Pavanannjay let us know it at once”, said the Chief Minister looking towards the other official inquisitively.

“Dear sir ! According to the predictions made by the astrologers and the scholars who have mastered the *Shastras*, Prince Pavanannjay is going to be a mighty hero and will live for a long time. He has a long span of life”.

The Chief Minister looked towards King Mahendra and said making his point dear.

“Your Excellency ! If you permit me, I would like to express my opinion on this matter”.

“Surely ! Speak out your opinion, dear, Chief Minister”.

Pausing for a few moments, then facing the vast assembly the Chief Minister said.

“My lord ! You have experienced many difficulties in your attempts to find a suitable bridegroom for Princess Anjana. Our aspiration is that whomever Princess Anjana marries, she must lead a happy and prosperous life; she must lead such a life as would bring her worldly prosperity and the otherworldly feli-

city and she must lead the life of a noble *Shravika* in accordance with the principles expounded for such a noble life by Bhagavan Jineshwardev. Not only this; our desire is that she must shower her sublime affection on her father-in-law, mother-in-law, brothers-in-law and sisters-in-law. We also desire that she must not encounter any difficulties or obstacles in her sensual enjoyments with her husband. Therefore, it is essential that Princess Anjana must marry a young man who is endowed with a long span of life. Prince Vidyutprabha is not inferior to Prince Pavananjay in any respect except in respect of the span of his life. Hence, according to me, only Prince Pavananjay is an ideal husband for our Princess Anjana”.

Pausing for a few moments, then breaking the silence of the court, King Mahendra said :

“Our Chief Minister has spoken the truth. What he has said is right. I too feel that Prince Pavananjay is the ideal match for our daughter, Anjana”.

When the decision was made, there was joy everywhere. The whole atmosphere in the court became permeated with elation.

How was that past ? How careful and concerned were parents in those days in choosing a bridegroom for their daughter ? How deeply they thought about the future of their daughters ! How noble were their thoughts and aspirations ! How cautious they were in respect of the welfare of their daughters !

If parents take such care regarding the choice of a suitable husband for their daughter where is the need for the girl to think about the choice ?

Actually, this is a serious matter to be thought about and to be assimilated. Why do one's children speak of their temperament; and likes and dislikes ? We have not thought about it seriously at any time; and if, an occasion arises we think of it in such a manner that our children feel that our thoughts relat-

ing to the choice are improper. Are not parents responsible for this situation? If parents realize the likes and dislikes of their children; and act upon that realization the children would not even by a mistake speak of their dispositions and oppose the wishes of their parents.

King Mahendra and Queen Hridayasundari knew very well the thoughts and feelings of their daughter, Anjana who was swinging joyously and buoyantly in the reeling swing of sinuous youth. They knew her dreams and aspirations. So, as soon as the proper time came, they began to search for a suitable bridegroom for her. The centre for their search was Anjana's liking the choice. They thought, "We should find a bridegroom who possesses the qualities that she admires such as a beautiful appearance, noble virtues, a tender and loving heart, valour and heroism. If parents do not realize the wishes and preferences of their daughters and sons and do not act upon that realization; and if they act according to their own ideology, likes and dislikes, disastrous consequences may arise.

Parents must devote time to understand the minds of their sons and daughters inspite of their countless engagements. They should find time to understand sympathetically the minds and hearts of their children.

"Victory to the king!" saying this, a Vidyadhar guard entered the court. He prostrated to the feet of King Mahendra; and said :

"Oh you ocean of grace ! Tomorrow is the holy day on which a pilgrimage to the Nandishwardweep, the supremely blissful holy place has to be made. Lakhs of Vidyadhars with their kings will come there and will carry out the worship of the Paramatma there. Tomorrow, there will be a splendid celebration on the Nandishwardweep".

"Good ! Very good ! We too shall make preparations for the pilgrimage. Actually, we do not get such a golden opportunity often in life. We get such opportunities only once in a blue moon," saying this, King Mahendra gave some ornaments as a

gift to him. Then, greatly overjoyed at the prospect of a pilgrimage to the Nandishwardweep, he turned towards, Queen Hridaysundari and said :

“Dear Queen ! Please make the necessary arrangements for the pilgrimage. We should reach the Nandishwardweep to-day. Please inform all in the palace to get ready for the pilgrimage.”

“As my dear lord commands !” The queen said this holding her hands over her forehead by way of saluting her husband, and went into the harem with her attendants. After that, King Mahendra carried out some discussion with his Chief Minister on some political matters and went into his chamber.

The news of the projected pilgrimage to the Nandishwardweep was announced throughout the city by the official announcers, with drum-beats. All the people of the city began to make hectic preparations for the pilgrimage. Even in the palace, all were absorbed in making enthusiastic preparations for the pilgrimage.

“Anjana ! Have you made the necessary preparations ?” Actually, Queen Hridaysundari had forgotten to tell her to get ready for the pilgrimage and Anjana sat in her room lost in an amusing conversation with her companions and attendants. Hearing her mother’s voice unexpectedly, she asked her with evident eagerness :

“Preparations for what, mother ?” She was totally unaware of the king’s plan to visit the Nandishwardweep.

“Ah ! Haven’t you received the news ! We are planning to go on a pilgrimage to the Nandishwardweep”.

“Very good ! I will get ready, at once. Think that I am ready”. Hearing about the plan to go on a pilgrimage to the Nandishwardweep the peacock of her heart began to dance with delight and elation. After her mother left the room, she gave instructions to her companions and attendants to make the necessary preparations for the pilgrimage; and turned to get ready for the pilgrimage, but she stopped a little, not finding there her friend, Vasant Tilaka.

"Where is Vasant Tilaka ?"

"Why ? I am here !" saying this, Vasant Tilaka entered the room.

"You will live for a long time. You will live for a hundred years. You appeared just when I thought of you".

"But my life-span will not be so long as my beloved friend's."

"Then do you desire to die before I die ?"

"Yes. I wish to die with my eyes fixed on your face when I have to die. If I die with you by my side I will not feel the dreadful pang of death". Vasant Tilaka said in a jovial manner.

"Ah ! What is this ? You are talking of death ! Please talk of living" Another companion of theirs said speaking in the middle.

"Oh ! Where were you till now ?" said Anjana.

"In the chamber of discussions", she said putting on an air of seriousness.

"Who allowed you to enter the secret counsel-chamber ?"

"Who can prevent me from entering any place in the palace?"

"Ah ! You have said it well".

"I just crept in unnoticed following mother".

"Really, you should be rewarded for your courage".

"Give it. Who will reject a reward ?"

"At least, tell me what took place there". Anjana said referring to the basic point of their conversation.

"The King and the Queen have settled your affair".

"Settled my affair ?"

"If not your affair, would they settle my affair?"

"You are beating about the bush. More matter with less art! Say clearly what you have got to say".

"She is too proud to say it clearly"; said Mishraka, another companion, speaking in the middle.

"You are not proud! Then, why don't you speak out?" said Vasant Tilaka, opening her eyes wide.

"If I had gone into the counsel-chamber stealthily, I would have spoken out clearly. I wouldn't have beaten about the bush like you" Mishraka also was not inferior to her in clever talk.

"We are wasting time in your irrelevant chatter! Mother will come here", Anjana said with a little vexation.

"What's the matter, dear friend? Why is mother coming now?" Vasanta asked.

"You know we have to go to the Nandishwardweep".

"Ah! Yes! I totally forgot this".

"Will you keep chattering thus irrelevantly or will you tell us what transpired at the counsel-chamber?"

"Now listen! I will tell you everything".

But even before Vasant Tilaka began her narration, Queen Hridaysundari came up, panting for breath.

"Anjana! What is this? You and your friends have not yet got ready!"

"I will get ready at once, mother".

"Your gossip will never end; the king has been waiting for you. The time for setting off is fast approaching. We are all waiting only for you".

"Mother, you go. We will join you immediately".

As soon as Queen Hridaysundari left the room, Anjana began speedily making preparations. Her attendants and companions placed the necessary dress and ornaments in a box studded with gems; and at once, they went to the airship.

With all necessary things, the king and the queen ascended the Viman with *Anjana* at an auspicious time; and they all set off to the Nandishwardweep.

XIX

ANJANA AND PAVANANJAY

After having taken a bath, King Mahendra wore beautiful washed, white clothes; and took the necessary auspicious substances in a gold plate and got ready to go to the Jin temple to worship the Paramatma. Seeing that her husband had got ready, Queen Hridayasundari also got ready to follow her husband to the temple.

"Is Anjana ready?" the king said turning towards the Queen.

"O Anjana! "Calling her daughter, Queen Hridayasundari went towards Anjana's room. And there Anjana, surrounded by her companions was absorbed in a jocular conversation with her companions. On hearing the Queen's voice, Anjana and her companions began to hurry through their preparations.

"You do not realize even this. The King has already got ready; and is waiting for you". Queen Hridysundari said, raising her voice to show her impatience.

Getting ready in a few moments, Anjana joined her father. Her companions also followed her, carrying the necessary substances in gold plates.

Taking the gold plate from her father, Anjana proceeded a few steps. All were greatly elated to see the sky-high towers of the Jin temples in the Nandishwardweep. They entered the Jin temple, in accordance with the principles expounded in the

Shastras; and worshipped the Paramatma with the sublime substances they had brought with them.

After having worshipped the Paramatma with substances, they sat in the central part of the temple facing the Paramatma to carry out devotional worship. (*Bhavapuja*). They began to sing songs of glorification with heartfelt devotion.

Even King Prahlad, the Vidyadhar king of Adityapur had come there on a pilgrimage with all the members of his family. They too had come to the temple of the Paramatma. He did not like to disturb the worship that King Mahendra was carrying out; so he sat behind him and was watching him with devotion.

Just then, king Prahlad happened to see Princess Anjana; and was greatly astonished by her beauty and her angelic grace and charm. At once, an idea flashed to him; but restraining his thoughts a little, he became absorbed in his devotion for the Paramatma.

The glorification of the Paramatma by singing songs came to an end. King Mahendra got ready to leave the temple with the members of his family. The Vidyadhar king, Prahlad also moved slowly behind him. They saw each other; and they embraced each other affectionately :

They made polite enquiries about each other's welfare and then both the Kings went to the place where King Mahendra was staying.

Being silent for a little while, King Prahlad, the King of Vidyadhars looked towards King Mahendra, in a serious and thoughtful manner; and was about to say something when King Mahendra understanding his inclination, said;

"Oh King ! Whatever you wish to say, you may say without any hesitation".

"I request you to grant a wish of mine".

King Prahlad said smiling gently, preparing the ground to mention what he desired to say.

“Not one; you may ask for two”, said King Mahendra encouraging him.

King Mahendra’s encouraging words removed all his hesitation. He opened his heart; and said;

“I desire that your daughter, Anjana should marry my son, Pavananjay. This is my wish”.

The moment he saw Anjana he decided that he should make Anjana his daughter-in-law. He felt that Anjana would be an excellent match to Pavananjay.

This was also the innate desire of King Mahendra. He did not hesitate even a little; he at once happily gave his consent. Not only this; in order to celebrate the marriage as soon as possible, he wanted to get an auspicious *Muhurta* fixed; so he at once sent for his court-priest.

When the court-priest came King Mahendra said smiling joyfully.

“Revered priest! Please fix an auspicious day for the marriage of Anjana so that the marriage may take place without delay”. Having said this to the Purohit, he looked towards King Prahlad.

King Prahlad also expressing his consent, said;

“Yes, Yes ! Why delay in an auspicious matter ? An auspicious plan should be carried out without delay”.

The court-priest, seeing that both the Kings desired the marriage to take place as soon as possible, thought that if he fixed up an auspicious and favourable day and if there was delay, both the Kings would be displeased; so he, instead of thinking of the matter in a subtle and careful manner, taking into consideration all details, thought of it grossly and said at once;

“Dear King ! The thirtieth day from to-day is quite auspicious”.

On hearing this, both the Kings were overjoyed. The *Jivas* are enveloped in ignorance. How can they know what evils exist in the womb of Time. This was the condition of King Mahendra and King Prahlad. How could they have even an inkling of the terrible calamity that was going to occur in the future? They did not know that if their children were married in that *Muhurta*, it would bring about in future a terrible and heart-rendering effect.

The *Jivas* that are immersed in happiness and prosperity and who are plunged neck-deep in worldly delights cannot realize that after crossing the cool shadows, they have to face the rigours of the scorching sun. Thorns always exist behind fine-looking flowers.

Both the Kings were supremely happy that the marriage was going to take place so soon, that too, since the marriage was fixed to take place only thirty days later, they were greatly elated.

They decided that the marriage should be celebrated on the beautiful banks of the *Manas Sarovar*, the most fascinating lake with nature smiling around it with all her graces and glories; and then they set off to that place.

The two Vidyadhar kings, by virtue of their miraculous power created a magnificent city on the banks of the lake. The city surpassed in splendour even the heavenly abode of Mahendra.

Pavananjay, hearing that his marriage was settled and that Anjana was going to be his bride, felt delighted and surprised. At once, he went to his bosom-friend, Prahasit. Without even a moment's delay, he said to Prahasit;

"Dear friend! Have you at any time seen Anjana? How is she to look at?"

"Anjana! yes, yes. I have seen her. She has such angelic beauty that even the divine damsels, Rambha and Urvashi appear ugly and unattractive in her presence. She is a girl of extraordinary beauty", Prahasit said smiling.

"Are you making fun of me ? Tell me the truth. Speak plainly. Have you really seen her ?" Pavananjay entertained some doubts regarding her looks, seeing the smiles on the face of Prahasit.

"Is this a matter for jokes, dear friend ? I have seen her; and I do not find words to describe her bewitching beauty. Let alone my inability to describe her beauty; even Brihaspati, the preceptor of the gods would not find adequate words to describe her beauty".

How could Pavananjay remain there after hearing the words of Prahasit ?

He was impatient to see for himself Anjana whose extraordinary beauty, his friend was glorifying in such glowing terms.

Placing his hands on the shoulders of Prahasit, looking straight into his eyes, Pavananjay said;

"Dear friend ! I desire to see Anjana, at once, and satisfy my curiosity. Please take me to her".

"But ... you can see her only the day after tomorrow. Can't you wait till then ?"

"Dear friend, Prahasit ! Now, to me every moment is like a month. The bird of my heart is eager and agitated to fly and have a look at Anjana".

Strange are the ways of love ! Who does not dance to the tunes of the god of love ? When the god of love has lifted up even the greatest sages, munis and mighty scholars and knocked them down, what about Prince Pavananjay who was a young man of bubbling youth ? When once a person is caught in the confounding whirlpool of sensual passion, it is almost impossible for him to get out of it. Indeed, rare are such people as can successfully get out of that whirlpool in the manner of Jhanjharia Muni, Sudarshan Seth and Sthulabhadraji, who easily and cheerfully rose from the whirlpool of sensual cravings.

Prahasit advising Pavananjay to have patience said, "Dear friend! Have a little patience. You will see Anjana your prospective wife, personally.. All right?"

Pavananjay heaved a sigh of relief after securing this assurance from his friend, Prahasit; and he began to look for the arrival of the night with uncontrollable eagerness when he would be able to see his fiancée. Every moment seemed to be a year to him.

But poor Pavananjay did not even dream that on that night the seed of a terrible calamity was going to be sown. If man could know the right thing at the right time, he would be a god indeed.

The *Jiva* that keeps traversing the *Samsar* with an intense emotional excitement and a hectic speed sometimes falls into miserable and pitiable circumstances. Not only this; he also drags other *Jivas* into those terrible and calamitous situations. The truth of this will be known to us from what happens in the life of Pavananjay.

The sun declined to the west and disappeared behind the peaks of the Western mountains. Dense darkness enveloped the earth. The sky was beautifully decked with innumerable twinkling stars. Pavananjay was maddened by his desire to see his fiancée, Ananja, renowned for her beauty. Prahasit came at the right time. He gave Pavananjay the necessary instructions; and then, the two set off through the sky and reached the banks of the Manasarovar, the magnificent lake.

King Mahendra had created by means of his magical and supernatural powers, a splendid mansion of seven storeys. The mansion looked resplendent in the light of the wicks burning in golden lamps studded with gems. At that time, Anjana sat in the seventh storey of her mansion engaged in a witty and jocular conversation with her companions.

The two friends stealthily crept into the seventh storey; and stood at a place where no one could see them; and from

where they could see everything clearly, and easily. Nobody could find out that they were hiding themselves there.

When Pavananjay saw Anjana his heart began to gallop like a flying horse. He kept gazing at her in complete forgetfulness. For a short while, even his heart stopped beating. The greatest beauty of the universe, Anjana was going to be his wife in a short time; and this thought made his heart dance in delight and elation like a gleeful peacock. He felt that she was one made but to love and he was elated by the thought that she was his chosen bride whose graceful smiles brightened the whole atmosphere.

Just then the conversation going on among Anjana's companions fell on his ears.

"Anjana ! You are, indeed, fortunate in getting a heroic and graceful youth like Pavananjay for your husband".

"Vasanta ! I have not come across anywhere in this world, a flatterer like you. I tell you except Vidyutprabha who is a *Charamshariri* and who will attain *Nirvan* in this life, none else can be a suitable husband to Anjana", Mishraka said speaking in the middle.

"What a mad creature you are ! At least, be a simpleton. Ah ! Why should our friend marry a man who is going to die soon. I wish to mention an important point. The husband should have a long span of life. Don't you realize this ?"

"Oh ! What is the use of longevity ? You are indeed a block-headed idiot ! Otherwise, you would not have spoken in this incoherent and senseless manner. Look here, "Nectar is only nectar even if it is a drop. But what is the use of poison even if we can get a large jug of it ?"

Anjana sat silently listening to the conversation that was going on between them. In a way, she had fallen into a strange mental conflict. She was unable to determine who was right of the two; whether Vasant was right or whether Mishraka was right. Nothing definite occurred to her. But at such a time as

this, she could not speak even a single word. If she said anything at that time she would unnecessarily become the object of the remarks and jokes of her companions.

But her silence at this junction sowed the seed of suspicion in the mind of Pavananjay. He thought, "What kind of lady is Anjana? Her companion is comparing me to poison but she is silent. Probably, she loves and admires Vidyutprabha. Probably, his image is enshrined in her heart. If there was any place for me in her heart, she would have at once stopped their prattle".

At once, his anger shot up to the skies.

He pulled out his sword; and moved forwards, a few steps "I will cut off the head of this wretched young lady and her companions who are so full of admiration for Vidyutprabha". He was about to pounce upon the young ladies, rushing forward impetuously but Prahasit stopped him.

"What an enormity are you going to commit? What are you upto?"

"Please do not stop me, Prahasit! I cannot have any peace of mind until I have sacrificed these wretched creatures to the fiery flames of my anger".

"Think calmly a little. Though a woman is an offender she should not be killed. But Anjana is absolutely innocent".

"You say that Anjana is innocent? Shut up. Do not unnecessarily provoke me", Pavananjay said with raging emotions.

"I tell you Anjana is absolutely innocent. When her companions are saying all this she is silent because she is shy and cannot speak out. It is natural feminine reticence. Do not misunderstand her silence. There is no place in her heart for Vidyutprabha".

Prahasit's indignant words checkmated Pavananjay's movements. He became silent. But his anger did not abate. He went

there with overflowing enthusiasm to see Anjana; but he returned home full of hatred and contempt for her.

His agitation did not cease; and he did not regain his peace of mind. A volcano seemed to be erupting in his mind. What had he been dreaming of? and what had come about? All his dreams had become shattered. He could not get a wink of sleep; and his mind became a boiling cauldron of agonizing thoughts. Countless conflicting and confounding thoughts rose in his mind like impetuous waves and brought about a stupefying crash. On one hand, his father had given his consent and the preparations for the marriage were going on in full swing; but on the other hand, in his mind there had arisen bitter contempt and abhorrence for Anjana. There seemed to be no way out of this conflict. His mind was being consumed by these conflicting thoughts that rose like fiery flames.

When, even after making hundreds of attempts, he could not find any solution to his problem, willy nilly, he remembered his friend, Prahasit. Prahasit also was eager to meet his friend. He could not get a wink of sleep that night. He kept tossing on his bed fearing that his dear friend, Pavananjay might commit some enormity in his half-mad mental state; and he was anxiously waiting for the day to dawn. Again and again, the thought rose in his mind that somehow or the other, he must eradicate from his friend's mind the wrong notion that he had developed regarding Anjana.

The day dawned. Prahasit straight went to the residence of his friend, Pavananjay. Pavananjay also was waiting for him. As soon as he saw Prahasit, he rose to his feet, came forward a few steps and embraced him affectionately. Then, the two friends sat on the cot.

"Dear friend! Why should I marry Anjana now?"

"Dear Prince. Think of it a little calmly".

"Prahasit! My mind is deeply agitated by this affair. Even now those words are piercing me like poisoned arrows; and my heartache is inexpressible!"

“Dear Pavananjay ! What you say may be true but if you for a moment think of the last night's event comprehensively you will surely realize that Anjana is absolutely innocent. I say, brother ! It is natural for the bride's companions to keep criticising the bridegroom on the night previous to the day of the marriage. It is a kind of fun for them; and that was what those girls were doing last night. In doing so, their intention was not to belittle her fiancé; they were merely making jokes. Moreover, according to our cultural traditions, the bride has to be silent at such times. That is the proper behaviour for a bride. If a bride at such a time takes part in such a conversation making remarks, her behaviour would be deemed indecent and unbecoming; and her companions would make fun of her, treating her as a butt of ridicule. Just because she was silent, you should not think that she loves, not you; but Vidyutprabha”.

“Prahasit ! You may say a hundred things in praise of her; but I have developed a bitter dislike for her. Don't you know that when once we develop a dislike or distaste for something, we cannot relish it afterwards, even if it is delicious food”.

“But do not forget that you are doing a great injustice to a noble lady and that your suspicion is senseless and not at all justifiable”.

“But I do not deem this an injustice at all. I have not yet married her; and if she loves someone else she is free to marry him.”

“Do not say such ignoble things”. A woman born in our Aryadesh (noble land) can give her heart only to one person and Anjana has already given away her heart to you. No alteration of any kind in her attitude is possible !”

“What can I do ? I can never marry her”.

“Come on. Let us have a stroll outside. Since last night, you have been agitated and worried. Probably a stroll in the morning will bring you some peace of mind; and then you will be able to think about this matter calmly and unemotionally”.

"No. No ! Prahasit, there is no need for any such thing". Pavananjay took Prahasit's hands into his and sat silent for a few minutes.

Silence and stillness prevailed in the chamber.

"Dear Pavananjay ! Do you know what kind of people are called great men ?"

"You please tell me".

"Great men are those who abide by their word. When once they have said something, they would never go against it. They respect their promises".

"That means ?"

"That means since you have already agreed to marry Anjana, you should not now go back on your word. You should not reject her now".

"I do not desire such greatness".

"No ! Do you say so ?" Prahasit said in a tone of deep anguish.

Pavananjay sat silent.

"You may not desire such greatness, but we have to safeguard the name and honour of our elders and ancestors". Prahasit said changing the tenor of his talk.

"But how have I brought disgrace upon our noble elders and ancestors ?" Pavananjay said with a gloomy face.

"Don't you know that your honoured father has given his consent to this alliance ? On that day on the Nandishwardweep. King Mahendra and King Pralad settled your marriage. Are you ignorant of this ? Think a little. If you now reject this alliance how can your father face the world ? Will it not be a disgrace to him ? You may say : " Did he ask for my opinion about the alliance ?" It is on account of his unshakable confidence in you that your father has settled your marriage to take

place with Anjana whose beauty and nobility are universally acclaimed, and now will you betray that 'trust your father has reposed in you ? Do you realize how deeply his heart would be pained and grieved if you now refuse to marry Anjana ? Have you thought about this ?"

"I will never betray my father's trust in me !" said Pavananjay changing his tone a little.

"But dear friend ! You are doing that very thing. Your behaviour is such that anybody can say that you are betraying the trust reposed in you by your father. Do you realize how deeply your father will be grieved when he comes to know of this ? Dear Pavananjay ! I know very well that you will be angry with me for having given you this suggestion. But it is my duty as a dear and true friend of yours to reveal to you my thoughts and feelings on this subject without any concealment. Whatever I know; whatever I have understood from the situation, I have told you frankly. This is my duty as a true friend of yours. If by doing so, I have offended you in any way, kindly pardon me". Prahasit's voice was choked with emotion. With a choked voice, he continued :

"Really, this is a machination of your evil fate. Otherwise, you would not have suspected such a stainless and noble lady as Anjana. It is nothing but the cruel mockery of fate that such a baseless accusation should be made against Anjana who is the very embodiment of nobility and purity. When misfortune descends upon people then differences and dissensions arise in their minds destroying their affection and love; and rifts appear even among close relatives. Such are the machinations of fate !"

"Prahasit ! The substance of all that you have said so far is that I should safeguard the honour and prestige of my elders even if it means the ruin of my life".

"Pavananjay. My dear friend ! That is not at all my intention. If my advice were to cause the ruin of your future life and happiness, I would not have insisted thus upon your marrying Anjana. In fact, I strongly believe that if you marry Anjana your

future life would be undoubtedly bright and felicitous. Do you really believe that your future life would be happy and prosperous if you marry some other girl? If your fate is adverse, even if you marry any girl thinking that she is the abode of all virtues, calamities will surely arise in your life”.

What a loving friend ! Though Pavananjay was a Prince, Prahasit spoke out his mind frankly without any hesitation. Prahasit played the role of a spiritual head in giving this advice to Pavananjay; and in doing so, he showed himself to be a dear friend who genuinely wished for his welfare. Can we find such friends now-a-days ? Even if we find such friends, do we pay heed to their advice ? We avoid the very sight of such well-meaning friends and turn away from them.

“Dear friend ! Look. Do not keep floating on the stream of your own thoughts. Carefully observe and understand the circumstances well; and then act in a manner which you deem proper. Enough. I cannot say anything more than this”.

Actually, Pavananjay was not in a position to ignore the advice of Prahasit. As a result of this, he decided to abide by his friend's advice; and gave his consent to marry Anjana.

But, inspite of all this, Pavananjay could not get rid of his contempt and abhorrence for Anjana. And how could he do so? Anjana had committed such sinful *Karmas* in her previous life that her husband would hate and despise her in this life. She appeared on the stage of this life after gathering sinful *Karmas* in her previous life; and so she had to experience the bitter fruits of those sinful *Karmas*. Her *Karmas* were such that her husband would not love and honour her in this life.

Even as the two friends were engaged in that conversation, an attendant opened the door; entered the chamber; bowed to the prince; and said :

“Revered prince ! Mother has been waiting for you. The time for your taking refreshments and milk has passed”.

“I will come just now !” saying this, Pavananjay rose to his feet; and went to meet his mother taking Prahasit with him.

In the heart of Queen Ketumati, Pavananjay's mother there arose vast waves of joy on which she floated dreaming sweet dreams about the future of her son. Her eyes were moistened with the tears of joy; and her lips trembled with words they uttered in sheer delight. Which loving mother would not be thus elated at the prospect of the marriage of her dearest son whom she loved more than her life? She received Pavananjay and Prahasit with sweet words; and gave them delicious refreshments and milk rendered fragrant by saffron; and after giving her son some incidental suggestions, she saw them off.

The two great Vidyadhar Kings, by means of their supernatural powers, created a new world of splendour and magnificence on the banks of the *Manas sarovar*, comprising sky-high mansions, fascinating gardens and parks, sinuous rills and fountains; and scintillating towers and turrets all of the purest gold. It was as if heaven had come down to earth. The whole atmosphere was resplendent with a celestial effulgence. The newly created city with its glorious mansions, with beautiful arches at every entrance and cross; with wreaths of green mango leaves hung from pillar to pillar, with flags bearing royal signs hoisted on every building and tower appeared to be a bride newly decked for marriage. Magnificent melodies emerging from various musical instruments filled the air.

Anjana dreaming sweet dreams about her future life was swinging in a golden swing of ecstasy and elation. The clever and teasing remarks of her friends made her smile sweetly, and sometimes she laughed aloud. Her smiles added grace to her beauty, and her laughter threw her into a flutter of fervent emotions. Of course, she had not seen her beloved Pavananjay personally, but she had seen his fascinating portrait. Hence, as she visualized his radiant face and heroic bearing she felt that he was the god of love himself; she again and again thanked her stars; and could not contain herself. Everyone praised her stars feelings that she had secured an ideal husband.

And in the auspicious *Muhurt* that had been fixed, the marriage of Pavananjay and Anjana took place; and the two

were for ever bound with the sacred bonds of marriage in the presence of all the relatives and friends who had assembled there.

Anjana accepted Pavananjay as her husband, with affection and devotion rising from the depths of her heart. She felt deeply grateful to her stars for having bestowed upon her such great good fortune as securing Pavananjay for her husband; but Pavananjay accepted her as his wife only mechanically by making a show of affection. He had already banished Anjana from his heart. She had no place, in his heart. Suspicion had poisoned every drop of his blood.

King Mahendra honoured King Prahlad on that occasion in a way that suited his royal status. He bestowed upon his darling daughter a fabulous dower of precious gifts such as various kinds of rare gems in gold plates; incomparably excellent jewels; countless horses of noble breed; magnificent elephants; innumerable attendants and servants at the time of sending her to her husband's house. The time came for sending her off to her husband's house. The tears flowed like incessant streams from the eyes of all her friends and relatives. King Mahendra and Queen Hridayasundari had been blinded with tears; and their voices were choked with grief at the prospect of the separation from their dear daughter. It was as if their hearts were cut and a part was being separated from them. They did not possess the strength and patience to bear with the separation from their daughter. Again and again, they sobbed and wept helplessly like children. They sobbed continuously; their voices were choked with grief; and their lips quivered in anguish.

At the end, somehow restraining their grief, they kissed Anjana on her forehead and said with tearful eyes and smothered voice.

"Dear child Anjana! To-day you are leaving us and are going away to your husband's house. Therefore, you must inscribe some words on the walls of your heart. Even by a mistake you should not ignore those words. These words of advice, if

you abide by them, will make your life felicitous and prosperous. Look thou ! Character these words upon your heart !

- * Always treat your father-in-law as your father.
- * Instal your mother-in-law in the place in your heart which all these days had been occupied by your mother.
- * Look upon your husband as your god and worship him always with the flowers of love and devotion.
- * Chastity is the imperishable treasure of your life. Always protect and guard it.
- * Always keep reciting *Shri Namaskar Mahamantra*.
- * Let the flowers of loftiness, magnanimity, forgiveness; forbearance and amity keep blooming in the garden of your heart !
- * Always keep your mind and heart firmly anchored to the precepts of the Paramatma !

And for the rest, dear daughter ! Just as you decorated our family with your unique virtues, unexampled accomplishments and your gracefulness, your sublime character and serenity, you must bring glory and honour to your father-in-law's family. Now and then, you must remember your father and mother and send them news about your welfare and prosperity". And queen Hridayasundari could not contain herself. She sank to the floor. By now Anjana's heart also broke down. She too began to weep bitterly. On account of the incessant flow of tears, Anjana's face became withered and wan. She fell at the feet of her father and mother. King Mahendra lifted her up; embraced her affectionately; and showered upon her the choicest blessings.

Anjana also tried to control her grief and accompanied by Vasanta Tilaka, her maid, she ascended the airship of her husband, Pavananjay.

First of all King Prahlad's airship started flying. Then, Pavananjay's airship took off from the banks of *Manas sarovar*. Anjana put her head out of the window near her; and looked at her father and mother. Within a few moments, the airship disappeared into the sky.

King Mahendra and Queen Hridayasundari returned to their residence in grief and tears.



XX

THE WHEEL OF JOY AND SORROW

Casting upon his heart the bundle of his shattered ambitions and frustrated aspirations, Pavananjay set off in the direction of his capital city, Adityapur.

King Prahlad gave his daughter-in-law, Anjana, a magnificent, seven-toreyed mansion for her residence. It was as if some heavenly mansion had been transplanted on the earth. Some mysterious beauty radiated from its walls and towers. The mansion overflowed with countless attendants, servants, the old members of the royal family and innumerable maids and companions whose movements to and fro seemed to be sinuous streams of silvery radiance. Everyone who saw Anjana's unexampled beauty became spell-bound with amazement. No one could refrain from admiring her beauty in unaffected terms. No one felt tired of glorifying the astounding grace and beauty of her form. All showered upon her the flowers of heartfelt admiration. Throughout the day visitors called upon Anjana; and praised the good fortune of King Prahlad and Queen Ketumati in securing such a daughter-in-law.

The day passed thus. The goddess of the night entered the earth placing her steps in a slow and leisurely manner. Anjana's heart thirsting for love was waiting eagerly to drink deep at the spring of love. She was impatiently waiting for the arrival of her dear husband, like a *Chataka* bird looking for rain-bearing clouds. Her eager and expectant eyes, again and again, kept looking towards the door, hoping to have a glimpse of her hus-

band's face which had been the delight of her dreams for some-time past.

Silence and stillness prevailed everywhere. Dense darkness enveloped the city of Adityapur. "Within a few moments, the god of my dreams will arrive ! The soft noise of his steps will fill my heart with the sweet melodies of love ! And then there will be a sweet and sublime union of our hearts. Our hearts will meet and unite for ever ! I will surrender myself to him, heart and soul ! I will place at his feet all that is mine !" This infatuation of various amorous thoughts and emotions began to flash through her eyes like lightnings.

The Chief sentinel watching at the gates of the royal palace rang a bell to indicate that it was twelve in the night. Anjana woke up from her dreaming sleep. When she looked around with searching eyes, she could see no one in the chamber except Vasanta Tilaka who was fast asleep at her feet. At once, she began to shiver with a nameless fear.

"Vasanta !" called Anjana, shaking violently her maid who was fast asleep on the ground. Her voice shook with grief.

"Hasn't Pavananjay come yet ?" She said looking at Anjana with her eyes full of amazement.

"No !" Anjana said with a broken heart.

There was silence everywhere.... the dreadful silence that causes nameless fears !.... The silence of the cemetery that fills the heart with a nameless grief.... the fair-complexioned face of Anjana was clouded with despair and dread. Various kinds of inauspicious thoughts and fears shook her to the brims of her being.

"But how long can we keep awake thus ? Come on. Let us go to sleep," said Vasanta in an affectionate and sympathetic tone, taking hold of her hand.

"Dear friend ! I cannot sleep, now"; said Anjana, heaving a deep sigh; and looked out into the window to conceal her tearful eyes from her.

"I think he is busy in some urgent affairs of state. You are unnecessarily agitated. You need not at all worry. There is nothing else the matter!" Vasanta said consoling Anjana. But Anjana would not be consoled by such false assurances. She was disconsolate and her tender face became crumpled with anguish. She sat silent and still like a stone-image! Even Vasant Tilaka could not sleep. How could she sleep when her dearest princess was in such anguish? When her dearest companion was, thus agitated and worried it was natural that she could not sleep.

They kept waiting thus for the arrival of Pavananjay throughout the night. They had only one ray of hope that as soon as it was morning, Pavananjay would come there; would apologize for his inability to come in the night; and that he would with words sweet as love, fill her heart with joy by cheering her up; but when, Pavananjay did not turn up in the morning also, all the hopes of Anjana were shattered; and her heart broke to smithereens.

Meanwhile, Pavananjay straight went to his chamber; and he began to engage himself in attending to the matters of administration; but his broken heart and agitated mind could not concentrate even upon the administrative matters. Because of his anger, he could not bring himself to meet Anjana. His anger built up an impenetrable wall between him and Anjana. Even though, his dear friend, Prahasit repeatedly advised him to behave rationally, and sensibly, he could not realize his blunder. On account of the effect of strong passions, low-minded *Jivas* become victims of miserable circumstances.

Pavananjay began avoiding even the very sight of Anjana. He vowed not even to look at the face of Anjana. Anjana's condition became miserable and unbearable. All her dreams and desires were shattered. The magnificent world of her dreams was burnt down to ashes. Moreover, there was no one to listen to her heart's agonized cry, except Vasanta Tilaka, who was there who could sympathize with that lonely and helpless girl whose face was now like a faded flower or a withered leaf? "Who was there who could understand her soul's anguish, her heart's agony and her deep mental agitation and solace her?"

The seven-storeyed mansion in which she lived looked deserted, desolate and ruined. Her agonized cries crashed against the walls and echoed throughout the chamber.

Dark clouds of despair and deep anguish, enveloped her mind. The tears streamed from her eyes incessantly. Distress and helplessness filled her heart.

Anjana felt that life without Pavananjay was dark and depressing. She felt that her life was enveloped by some dreadful darkness, like the night of the new moon-day when the moon does not shine. Her life became a scorching desert.

For some days past, Anjana had not even taken a bath. She had not combed her rich and luxuriant hair. She had not put on beautiful garments; nor had she put on any ornaments. Her eyes had grown red with incessant weeping. On account of anguish her white and radiant face had grown, gloomy, bleak and blighted. She lay on her cot like a dead body experiencing death, in life. She kept tossing on her bed, in distress. Seeing her dearest friend steeped in anguish, Vasanta Tilaka said, stroking her back, compassionately :

Anjana ! What is the use of thus endlessly grieving ?”

“I have lost everything that was mine, Vasanta ! The treasure of my life has been plundered !” Anjana wept sobbing like a helpless child. She placed her head over her knees; and wept.

“Anjana ! My dearest friend ! Since you love the words of the Paramatma, it is not proper for you to give way to despair, in adversity. Those who are daunted by adversities and agitated by sorrows do not have any faith in the doctrines of sin and merit. They are weak and unwise; but you are not one such. Then, why do you weep ? Regain your equanimity; summon up some courage; and face the situation boldly. What is the use of losing your heart thus ? Come on ! Get up. It does not bring glory to you if you thus keep weeping”.

"Dear friend ! I know all that. But what shall I do ? I am unable to bear with this disaster. I know very well that this is the bitter fruit of my *Karmas*; and that I have to experience it. I do not disdain Pavananjay for this even a whit. I am not angry with him. I do not also find fault with him. He is undoubtedly a treasure-house of lofty virtues".

"I am an unfortunate woman. In fact, I have caused grief to him. Fie upon my life ! I could not bring him happiness. It is this grief that has been eating into my heart every moment". Again the tears flowed from her eyes. Vasanta wiped her tears off with the edge of her garment; and raising her voice a little said expressing her anger.

"Oh you mad creature ! Who says that you are an unfortunate woman ? Probably, there is no woman upon this earth who is so fortunate as you. You are absolutely faultless and peerless.... perfect as a gem of the purest lustre. It is Pavananjay's fault completely.... Only he is responsible for this disaster ! If he did not like you.... if he wanted to slight you.... if he had such mean motives, he could have rejected you even before marrying you. Why did he marry you if he hated you ? He should have thought about everything and taken a decision beforehand. He has no right to sport with the lives of others !"

"Don't say so my dear friend ! If the clouds of sorrow descend upon any *Jiva* it is because of his own or her own sinful *Karmas* gathered in earlier lives. Surely, some sinful *Karma* of mine has risen to the surface; that is why such a noble man as he has entertained some inauspicious thoughts about me. It is all my fault; not his :

The wheel of time kept revolving. The news that Pavananjay had abandoned Anjana spread like wild fire. Everyone in the royal family and in the kingdom came to know of it. When this news fell on the ears of Queen Ketumati, she felt as if she was hit in the vitals. She was thunder-struck. Her grief and agony knew no bounds. She tried her best to persuade her son to see reason; but Pavananjay did not budge an inch. He stuck

to his guns. He was adamant and unyielding. Moreover, he could not give a satisfactory explanation to his mother, regarding his strange conduct towards Anjana. He could not explain to her what Anjana's fault was; and why he was angry with her. Whenever his mother questioned him about it, he merely remained silent. He did not also say what he wanted. He did not speak out his mind. He could speak out only if he could prove that Anjana was at fault; but he could not prove it. At least, if he revealed to his mother the doubts and suspicions he had in his mind, those doubts and suspicions could have been removed; and the two could have become reunited but he did not speak out his mind. He remained still and silent like a rock.

And, in this manner, often, man inflicts punishment upon others who are absolutely innocent. He makes innocent people victims of his anger and punishment. Especially if elders on account of being inveigled into some false belief by the insidious words of others, get angry with youngsters without understanding the circumstances, terrible calamities can ensue; and the lives of the innocent youngsters are ruined. Therefore, it is the duty of elders not to be inveigled into false beliefs and not to take any decision or step without fully understanding the circumstances; and they should not also inflict unnecessary punishment on youngsters.

Queen Ketumati went often to Anjana and tried to console her. She had great affection and love for her; and heartily sympathized with her lot. But what could she say to Anjana? She never spoke to anyone; she never conversed with anyone jovially; and she never stirred out of her chamber. She began to spend all her time in meditating upon the Arihant Bhagwan and in assimilating his words. She was always immersed in glorifying the Paramatma. In this manner... not one... not two... not three... but twenty two years passed.

During those twenty two years, Anjana developed a high level of equanimity by virtue of which she could face any adversity with imperturbable serenity. She made a deep study of the doctrines relating to *Karmas* and their auspicious and inauspicious effects; and thus extended her intellectual horizons.

Not only this; even her friend, Vasant Tilaka remained by her side throughout those long years sharing her sorrows; taking care of her with deep interest; and thus she, by her affection for her friend, exemplified a lofty kind of friendship.

One day a messenger came from the mighty hero, Ravan, the King of Lanka, to the court of King Prahlad, the Vidyadhar king. He bowed to King Prahlad and conveyed to him Ravan's message thus :

"King Prahlad, the greatest of the Vidyadhars ! You know very well that Varun, the King of Varunpur has been defying the authority of King Ravan, and has been rejecting his authority. He is indeed the very embodiment of egoism and a false sense of prestige".

"Infuriated by his insolence, when King Ravan sent a messenger with the message that he should surrender himself to him and accept his overlordship. Varun reprimanded the messenger and sent him back humiliated. He is very proud of his powers and abilities".

"Then is king Varun ignorant of what happened to Indra, Nalkuber and others at the hands of Ravan ? Were they not routed and humiliated by King Ravan ?" King Prahlad said remembering the thrilling story of King Ravan's stupendous achievements in warfare.

"Oh king ! He knows all that. But he says haughtily," I am not Indra or Nalkuber; nor am I Sahasrakiran ! You should not commit the mistake of equating me with Maruth. I am Varun ! I am Varun, the brave hero ! If Ravan is proud of his powers and of the supernatural weapons which he has obtained from heavenly beings let him come to Varunpur and show his strength and abilities. I am ready to put down his pride and his intoxication of imagined superiority". That is what he said to the messenger".

"Did the mighty Emperor Ravan hear this message ?" King Prahlad asked anxiously.

"Yes, when the messenger came to our court and conveyed this insolent message, King Ravan was greatly infuriated. He, at once, ordered his able and heroic commanders Khar and Dushan to march with a large army to Varunpur; to invade it and to capture Varun and bring him alive to his presence".

"What happened next?"

"What else could happen? The heroic warriors Khar and Dushan, at once, took a large army with them; and invaded Varunpur. Varun had received information of the impending invasion through his spies. At once, he made preparations for the war; and came into the battle-field accompanied by his heroic sons, Rajiv and Pundarik and a large army. A terrible war broke out between the two armies.

Varun is an incomparable master of the art of war. His sons are unique as warriors and excel their father. They made extraordinary battle-formations of soldiers; and pounced upon the Rakshasa army like a cloud of locusts. A tremendous furore arose everywhere on account of the terrible war. Soldiers of both the sides grappled with each other thirsting for each other's blood. In ability and military prowess neither army was inferior to the other; so, both the armies determined to achieve a victory fought in a heart-rending manner. The war went on for some days. Neither was willing to retreat. Countless soldiers on both sides were killed. Since there was no sign of the war coming to an end; one day, Varun with his sons challenged Khar and Dushan and attacked them. Within a short time, Rajiv and Pundarik captured alive Khar and Dushan respectively.

As soon as Khar and Dushan were captured, the soldiers of the Rakshasa army began to run helter-skelter; and there was a stampede. Some were killed; and some ran away to save their skin and some were taken captive. The news of the capture of Khar and Dushan reached the ears of King Ravan with the speed of wind. Ravan, the King of Lanka was shocked to hear this news. He felt thunder-struck. King Ravan, that Bellona's bridegroom decided to defeat and capture Varun. He has issued

orders to all his allies and subordinate Vidyadhar kings to march against Varun. It is for that reason that I have been sent to you”.

After hearing the entire story from the messenger, King Prahlad, the Vidyadhar king on account of his love for Ravan and because he received his message, got ready to travel to Lanka with his army. He ordered his army to get ready for a war.

Pavananjay also listened to every word of the messenger from Lanka. Seeing that his father was making preparations for a war to assist Ravan, the King of Lanka, he made a determination; and said to his father :

“Dear father ! You kindly remain here. Kindly permit me to go and fight against Varun and to assist Ravan, the King of Lanka”.

“Dear son ! Fighting against Varun is not a children’s play : nor is it a joke. Don’t you know how valiant and capable are the sons of Varun ? Within a trice, they captured alive such mighty military commanders as Khar and Dushan; and have attained a victory”.

“But father ! I am also not an ordinary soldier. Am I not the son of King Prahlad, the heroic king of Vidyadhars ! I too am not acting in an inexpedient and immature manner. Let me make the sons of Varun taste my valour a little. You need not at all worry. All are not like Khar and Dushan”. Pavananjay said in a determined tone.

In consequence, King Prahlad permitted his son Pavananjay to proceed to Lanka with a large army. Pavananjay bowed to his father; and decided to abide by his father’s command.

From the royal court, Pavananjay went straight to his palace. Prahasit also was there. Seeing the rays of cheerfulness and activeness on the face of Pavananjay, after a long time, Prahasit said :

“What’s the matter, dear friend ? To-day, you seem to be very cheerful and unable to contain yourself ?”

“Prahasit ! What you say is true. We have to get ready, at once”.

“What for ?”

“We have to march with our army to assist Ravan, the King of Lanka, in his war”.

“Oh ! I see ! This is the matter; is it ? I thought it was something else”.

Pavananjay narrated to Prahasit the story of Ravan's invasion of Varun's kingdom. He narrated to Prahasit all the details he knew about the capture of Khar and Dushan; the message brought by the messenger of Ravan, the King of Lanka and his plan to wage a war against Varun again.

After hearing all this, Prahasit became serious and thoughtful.

“What are you thinking of, Prahasit ?”

“No, dear friend ! You are thinking of something. Have you no confidence in my valour and abilities ?”

“I have an unshakable confidence in your valour and abilities”.

“Then, what are you thinking of ?”

“I am thinking of this matter. Of course, we go to war but we do not know when we can return. This is a war. It may be over soon or it may go on for years”.

“What does it matter ? What work are we turning out here ?”

“Of course, we have something to do here and it is a very important duty, if you deem it so”.

The anguish that Anjana had been experiencing for the past twenty-two years was piercing Prahasit's heart like a thorn. This sorrow had been eating away his heart like a cancer, imperceptibly. Though Prahasit was a bosom-friend of

Pavananjay he had failed to change his mind in respect of this injustice. He had no other way but to keep silently watching her anguish, with overwhelming sorrow. His fear was that if Pavananjay went away to the wars he might not return for years and Anjana in consequence would have to experience inordinate anguish caused by the separation from her husband. She would have to spend all her life languishing thus, pining for the love of her husband. Of course, for some years past, he had not spoken to Pavananjay about Anjana, but on that day, he felt that he must remind Pavananjay of his duty towards his wife; whatever he might feel; otherwise, he thought that a terrible injustice would be done to Anjana.

“Dear friend ! you have not cared to pay heed to my advice but at least, now, before setting off for the wars you must cheer up Anjana and take leave of her. This is your moral duty”.

As soon as he heard the name of Anjana, the feelings on his face changed. It became grim and serious. His face which was a little while ago full of enthusiasm and elation began to burn with anger.

“Prahasit ! Do not mention the name of that wretched creature. I disdain even her name. Have you forgotten that event ?”

And at once, that event that had taken place before his marriage appeared before his mental eyes. He visualized Anjana in her beautiful bridal dress sitting in her chamber in the midst of her companions... one maid condemning him and commending Vidyutprabha... and Anjana's silence... He began to burn with anger and hatred.

“I am not prepared to hear anything about her... She may be...”

“Dear friend ! Please do not say so ! Will this kind of behaviour bring you glory ? You are a man of intelligence, wisdom and you have a high sense of justice and at the hands of such a great man as you a noble and virtuous lady should not

suffer injustice. An innocent life should not wither away in the bud. Therefore you must... reconsider your attitude towards her. This is your duty. It is your moral duty to re-examine the whole matter”.

Pavananjay was silent. He did not show any reaction to the words spoken by Prahasit. Prahasit gave up all hopes of a reconciliation between Pavananjay and Anjana; and stopped speaking. He too began making preparations for the war.

The news of Pavananjay's preparations for the war spread throughout the city. When Anjana heard about it, she sat like a stone-image still and motionless. The creeper of her life was sure to wither away, caught in the coils of the pangs of separation from her husband. It could grow green and put forth tender sprouts only if it was watered with the love of her husband, Pavananjay but she now knew the fundamental doctrines of *Karma* and *Dharma*. Therefore, even after a lapse of twenty-two years, she kept her love for her husband glowing like a sacred light in her heart.

How careful and cautious was Anjana ! How sensible and sagacious she was ! She kept her mind and heart under her control. This is an excellence even in great men. We may develop love and affection for a person but when we come to know that, that beloved person has no love or affection for us we too stop loving that person, though our love for the person may be worldly or ideal. This is the way of the world but the way of great people is different from this. Their love is imperishable. They may come to know that a certain person who loved them and whom they loved has ceased to love them but they do not find fault with that person. They say, “Yet him for this my love no whit disdaineth”. They think that it is on account of their own sinful *Karmas* that they are deprived of the love of that person. They think, “We have become worthy of contempt because of our own sinful actions. Even if that person does not love us, we will continue to love that person”. But some people think thus, “If that person loves us we too shall love him; otherwise not”. This is the way of ignoble persons. This is a kind of business or bargain but Anjana did not belong to this class of women.

She was a woman of indisputable nobility and she belonged to a lofty level of ethical excellence. Pavananjay might not love her; he might have done her a grievous injustice; but she would not despise him for that reason. On the contrary, her love for Pavananjay continued to burn brightly in her heart always. She never entertained the evil thoughts of forgetting her harsh and heartless husband and developing love for some other person. She never entertained such ignoble thoughts. That is why she is famous even today as a *Mahasathi*, a wife of indisputable ethical excellence; that is why even today she is adored and worshipped by all.

Every nook and corner of the city began to reverberate with the sounds of the bugles. The sounds of the battle-drums inspired the warriors to issue ferocious war-cries. The war-cries of the vast army rolled through the sky like a mighty wave. Soon after Pavananjay sat in his chariot and set off, his army also marched behind him. The march of victory passed slowly through the main roads of the city.

Anjana with her dear companion Vasanta Tilaka stood behind a huge pillar to have a glimpse of her husband's face and to wish him success in his march of victory.

She had grown lean and emaciated. The loveliness of her face had faded away. The radiance of her face had disappeared. Her large eyes which were black as collyrium had grown, bleak and blighted. On account of bitter anguish her rosy cheeks had faded away. She stood there looking for the appearance of her husband with fixed eyes.

All of a sudden, Pavananjay's eyes fell on Anjana. As soon as he saw her, the flames of abhorrence flared up in his heart. Anjana's incomparable beauty which had faded, her fascinating body which had become withered; her sublime virtues; her extraordinary knowledge, her intellectual and spiritual excellences could not extinguish the fires of his disdain and abhorrence. As long as sinful *Karmas* are potent, a person's virtues, beauty and accomplishments cannot make any impression upon the minds of others.

When the procession came nearer, Anjana forgetting everything hurriedly ran forward and even before anybody could stop her she fell at the feet of Pavananjay. Folding her hands over her forehead she said in a voice shaken with emotion, "Oh lord of my life ! Until to day during these twenty-two years of our married life, you have not thought of me even once; nor did you give me an opportunity of seeing you; yet I implore you not to forget me... I entreat you to give a place to me in your heart where I will dwell as your humble slave... May your march be victorious by the grace of the Paramatma ! May you return victorious ! May you attain success in your endeavour by the grace of the Almighty".

But Pavananjay was totally deaf to her words. Treating her as a stone-image, he reprimanded her severely and unmoved by her words, he proceeded on his march.

How cruel and monstrous he was ! What a terrible kind of injustice ! Would not this shock break the heart of Anjana ? For a few moments, Anjana stood stunned by his cruelty. With the help of Vasant Tilaka she somehow managed to return to her palace and to lie down on her bed in deep despair.

There arose flames of anguish in the heart of Anjana who had been reprimanded and slighted by her husband. She felt like a tree whose roots had been cut. This separation from her husband and his incomprehensible hostility towards her filled her with deep despair and she wept like a helpless child.

But Pavananjay cared very little for her feelings. He totally forgot her and with his vast army he went travelling through the sky.

Flying from height to height he reached the banks of the *Manas sarovar*; and pitched his camp there. By virtue of his supernatural powers, he at once brought into existence a huge palace.

It was a beautiful evening. The sky was clear and cloudless. The splendour of the moon-light had brightened every

nook and corner of the world. Cool breezes were blowing, wafting the fragrance of the rarest of flowers, bringing sweet comfort to the heart. After having completed his duties for the day, he sat at the window of his palace taking rest. His mind was ranging freely through the world of his own imagination. The banks of the lake *Manas sarovar* had become lonely and desolate. The soft waves of the lake again and again rose as if to embrace the banks. Just at that moment his mind was drawn towards the banks of the lake from where he heard an anguished cry of lamentation. Shocked by the cry, he looked around wondering who was crying but he could see no one; yet he could hear someone crying in great anguish. When he closely observed the banks of the lake he heard a *Chakravaka* bird lamenting in a pitiable manner, on the bank of the lake.

Though the delicate lotus stalks were within sight, it did not make any attempt to peck at them. The melodies of the waves rippling on the deep lake could not bring any solace to its heart. Even the rainbow hues that decked the horizons could not cheer its heart. The *Chakravaka* was crying in anguish on account of separation from its mate.

When Pavananjay saw this sight of the agony of the bird his hard heart melted away; it became soft and tender; and he began to think; "Throughout the day this *Chakravaka* bird keeps sporting with her mate. They are never asunder throughout the day; yet in the night, not finding her mate, near her, she keeps crying thus in agony and anguish. How deeply is she agonised by the separation from her lover! If this bird which lacks the faculty of reasoning can thus experience such anguish on account of the separation from her lover for a night what should be the extent of anguish experienced by Anjana who has had to experience the anguish of separation from her husband for years?"

After twenty-two long years, today, for the first time, there arose in his heart compassion for Anjana. Her sinful *Karmas* had caused that terrible anguish to her for twenty-two years. Now, probably, the effect of those sinful *Karmas* had been

exhausted. "Oh ! I married Anjana on these very banks of the *Manas sarovar*. But it was a mere formality. My heart was not in it. After the marriage I abandoned her. I did not even allow her to enter my presence; and I have been moving away... far away from her; let alone touching her; I did not even care to glance at her face once after the marriage. I never met her even for a moment; let alone meeting her, I never spoke a word to her; that too not for one or two years but for twenty-two years. How deeply she should have been wounded by my ill-treatment ? I wonder how she has been able to keep herself alive. She must have experienced immeasurable grief and anguish on account of her separation from me. Even that is inconsiderable when compared with her action at the time of my setting off on this march of victory. When I was setting off on my march of victory, she summoned up courage enough to come forward; to fall at my feet; and to wish me success and victory, and when she did so, I cruelly and harshly reprimanded her and spurned her. I did not care to hear a single word of hers; and I behaved arbitrarily ignoring her feelings. She has suffered extraordinary anguish on account of my indifference towards her. What a terrible enormity have I committed !

"Her body has become withered like a fallen leaf. Her face is furrowed with anguish and despair. Her face reveals her deep anguish and is enveloped with the darkness of the evening of her broken heart. Prahasit told me many times that she had been suffering endless agony on account my attitude towards her; and that she had been languishing in anguish, day and night. Her beautiful and flower-soft body has withered; and looks like a mere skeleton. During these twenty-two years, she never ate anything delicious; she never drank anything tasty; and she never wore any colourful garments or ornaments."

When he thought of all these things, his heart stopped beating for a while; and it melted away in compassion. Before his mental eyes, there arose the innocent face of Anjana gleaming with a sublime effulgence; and beside it, he also saw his own face distorted by imaginary doubts and suspicions and rendered ungainly by his own mental aberrations; and unfair

treatment. A shiver ran through his body which ranged to the brims of his being like a flash of lightning.

He sat in his arm-chair overpowered by his impetuous emotions. His body shook like a dry leaf shaken by gusty winds. He went drooping and groping for the door of Prahāsīt's chamber. Seeing Pavanānjay suddenly and unexpectedly entering his room, he entertained many doubts and fears. Prahāsīt got up and sat upon his bed. Noticing the seriousness and thoughtfulness in Pavanānjay's face, he asked doubtfully :

"What's the matter !"

"To-day ... this very moment we have to return to our city".

"Why ?"

"We have to return to our capital city of Adityapur; and I want to atone for my sins". His whole body was wet with perspiration.

"Of which sin are you speaking ?" Prahāsīt asked with amazement.

"The sin I committed in ill-treating Anjana, I want to make atonement for the grave injustice I have done her".

At first, Prahāsīt could not believe his ears; and when he realized what Pavanānjay was saying, his eyes welled up with tears of joy. In great joy and elation, he embraced Pavanānjay. Pavanānjay's eyes also welled up with tears. He took Prahāsīt to the window and pointed his hand towards the direction from which the cry of the *Chakravaka* bird was surging. Even now, the female *Chakravaka* was crying in anguish.

"Dear friend Prahāsīt ! Look ! How sorrowfully the bird has been pining for her lover ! Has not Anjana been experiencing the same anguish ?" Pavanānjay said in a tone charged with emotion.

"That impossible thing which no one could do, this bird has done. Its cry has opened my eyes. It has removed the blinding and distorting scales from my eyes. Its cry has softened and melted my hard and cruel heart. On account of the separation from her lover only for one night, this bird has been crying and

lamenting thus; but I have kept her away even from my shadow for twenty two years. I have abandoned her completely; and, now, I do not know what might be her condition”.

“No, Prahasit. I cannot bear this any more. All these days, I did not realize what I was doing. I had totally misunderstood her; and I was wandering through the mazes of mistakes and misunderstandings. Surely, she has been crushed under the weight of my hardness, cruelty and unjust treatment. When I set off on my march of victory, I slighted her; and reprimanded her; and that should have been a message of death to her”.

Pavananjay's eyes were wide with fear and horror. He began to shudder at the enormity he had perpetrated. He embraced Prahasit and began sobbing like a helpless child.

“Pavananjay ! What is the use of weeping ? Even now you can set right the situation. You have realized your mistake; that is enough. It is said that if one makes amends for one's mistake, it is no more a mistake”.

“No dear friend ! I am a sinner. I am a wretched creature. I am a foul-tongued monster ! I am a mean fellow ! How can I face her now ? and how can I say, “My goddess ! I caused the greatest calamity to you; and I have pushed you into hell to suffer countless tortures. Kindly pardon me !” Pavananjay's voice was choked. The tears rolled down his cheeks.

“Friend ! To err is human. Naturally, men act unjustly sometimes; but you have realized your blunder. This is indeed a great thing. Truly Anjana is fortunate. She is indeed blessed; and that is why she has a noble man like you for her husband”.

“Prahasit ! Get up, let us not delay. Let us at once return to Adityapur. Otherwise....”

“Otherwise that noble woman experiencing anguish by the separation from her husband may commit suicide”. Suddenly, Prahasit entertained a strange fear.

And the two friends, at once, set off to Adityapur; and began travelling through the sky.

XXI

THE MOCKERY OF FATE

Pavananjay, accompanied by Prahasit, travelling through the sky, arrived at Adityapur. They landed their Viman in a garden outside the city. The two friends, at once, set off towards the palace of Anjana. Prahasit whispered into the ears of Pavananjay. "We should go to Anjana's chamber unnoticed by anyone".

"But where is the need for our going there unseen by others? Can we not go there openly! Who can stop us from going there?" Pavananjay did not like the suggestion made by Prahasit.

"I want to prove that even to-day, no one except you has a place in the heart of Anjana. And inspite of the passage of twenty two years, she is experiencing the same grief and distress on account of the separation from you". Without waiting for a reply from Pavananjay, Prahasit held his hand and went forward with soft and silent steps.

It was a seven-storeyed palace. The lights were still burning in one chamber; and the brightness fell on the road. Both thought that Anjana was staying in that chamber.

Both were Vidyadhars. By virtue of their supernatural powers, within the twinkling of an eye, they were in the seventh storey of the palace. The door of the chamber was partly shut; it was not bolted from inside. From the door one could see what was going on inside. Not only that; one could also clearly hear the conversation going on inside.

"Anjana ! How long will you keep wailing this ?" Anjana was tossing on her bed like a fish out of water; and Vasant Tilaka took her head into her lap; and tried to console her.

"Dear friend ! My misfortune knows no bounds. I am unable to bear with my anguish. My heart has broken into pieces. I do not know what sin I have committed to suffer thus abandoned by my dear lord"; and she began to weep.

"What is the use of weeping thus ? Have patience. Great men say that we should retain our calmness and composure in times of calamities. That is true, Anjana ! The *Samsar* moves in a strange and perverse manner. Sorrows succeed joys; and joys succeed sorrows. When that is so will not the sun of happiness rise in your life ? "If winter comes, can spring be far behind ?" Surely the sun of happiness will rise in your life; and then your life will be filled with prosperity and felicity. Therefore, stop wailing; and try to face the situation with courage and patience". Vasanta said again to console Anjana, passing her hand over her head affectionately.

Anjana stopped weeping. She turned on her bed and lay facing the wall of the chamber. Her mind had become a total blank.

Prahasit's heart melted away. He slowly opened the door and went in. Anjana saw him. Anjana was shocked to see a man there. "Who is this man ? He seems to be creeping in like a thief". Her grieved heart shook with fear but she was not greatly terrified. The next moment she spoke aloud in such a way that her voice echoed in the chamber, "Who are you ? "Why have you come here ? Are you a thief ? At once, get out. A stranger should not enter a woman's chamber. You should not stay here even for a moment. Get out or you will be cut to pieces and thrown to kites. Look here Vasanta. Find out who he is. He has crept into our chamber like a thief. This wicked man does not realize that by coming here like this he is walking into the jaws of death. Except Pavananjay no other man can enter this chamber".

Prahasit bowed to her politely and said, "Noble lady, I hope you are well. I am Prahasit, the bosom friend of Pavananjay. I have come here with Pavananjay to see you".

She kept looking at the wall and said in a sorrowful voice; "Prahasit! Have you come here to make fun of me or to scoff at me? Already I have been hammered into pieces by my *Karmas*. I am a broken-hearted woman. At such a time you too have thought of making fun of me but you are not at fault. All this is the result of my sinful *Karmas*. When my *Karmas* are sinful and cruel who can help me? My *Karmas* have been causing this anguish. Otherwise, would such a great man, such a noble man as my dear Pavananjay abandon me to knock about from pillar to post in distress and despondency? Never! Such a thing would not have taken place but for my *Karmas*. Nobody can alter the effects of *Karmas* and nobody can prevent them from causing grief to us.

And her blank eyes welled up with tears. "As soon as I had taken the seven bridal steps around the fire he abandoned me. He has rejected me completely and I have been suffering the anguish of separation from him. I have been suffering thus for twenty two years. Though I am being consumed by the fires of separation I am still alive and I am a sinner. I should have committed some great sin in my previous life".

Prahasit could not check his tears. Already, he had been deeply grieved by the anguish of the noble lady. But this was not a time for weeping; so he wiped his tears with his garment. Pavananjay who was standing behind the door heard it all; and he too could not check his streaming tears when he saw Anjana who was once a fascinatingly beautiful lady, but who was now a mere skeleton. He cursed himself.

Pavananjay could not stand there any more. At once, he came forward, and stood beside Prahasit with a bowed head. He said in a voice shaken with emotion;

"My dear goddess! You are absolutely innocent. You are absolutely stainless. But I, on account of my arrogance, caused

all this anguish to you by casting a baseless blame upon you; and for all this evil I am to blame. It is my fault. I have deceived you by making baseless accusations against you. I have done an irreparable damage to you. On account of my own stupidity I abandoned you; and as a consequence of my heartlessness you were about to die. For all your terrible anguish, I am the cause, Pardon me, dear goddess ! Pardon me”.

Anjana could not believe her eyes or ears. She first thought that it was but a dream. When she realized that Pavananjay was actually there, she stood up. On account of joy and shyness her cheeks became red. She felt greatly thrilled and delighted; and her blood began to flow through her veins impetuously. Her heart began to beat joyously. She bowed her head; bent down and touched his feet with devotion and love.

Pavananjay made her sit beside him. For a few moments, he kept gazing on her white face which was now decked with joyous smiles. For sometime, there was absolute silence in the chamber. Prahasit and Vasant Tilaka swayed with delight. After a little while, Pavananjay said :

“My dear goddess ! Won't you pardon me ? Indeed, I am a wretched creature; otherwise, would I chide you and keep you away though you are innocent ? Won't you give me the opportunity of begging for your pardon ?” Pavananjay's voice became choked with emotion. He could not speak any more. His eyes welled up with tears.

Anjana placed her hand over his lips to indicate that he should not speak thus; and said;

“Oh Lord of my life ! Do not say such things; your words pierce my heart like arrows and pain me. You are my god; and you should not speak this. I have been your slave for ages. Please do not make me a sinner by asking for my pardon. If one realizes one's mistake, it ceases to be a mistake. What else do I desire ? To-day, you have come to me and I have attained the glory of my life. I feel that I have attained everything. My austerities of countless *Janmas* have brought their fruit. I feel supremely blessed !”

For sometime, there was silence everywhere.

Prahasit and Vasant Tilaka, finding an opportunity, silently slipped away.

The night of sorrow and desperation ended; and the day of joy and happiness dawned in the lives of Pavananjay and Anjana. For the last twenty two years, Anjana had experienced great anguish and had become broken-hearted, withered and wan but now her tender body regained a fresh life and looked like a withered creeper becoming green again and putting forth tender leaves and buds that seemed to be blooming into bliss.

This was like a magnificent flash of lightning in their lives and in its brightness, Anjana experienced the felicity of married life. Pavananjay and Anjana experienced heavenly felicity and fancied themselves floating on the waves of some indescribable elation.

When the night had almost ended Pavananjay said to Anjana, seeking her permission to go, "My goddess ! I have to go now; otherwise, father will"

"But"

"My dearest wife ! Give up all your worries and agitations. Henceforth, no shadow of sorrow shall darken your life. You should not allow any kind of worry to agitate you. You must always remain happy and cheerful. We will go to the war-front and after carrying out our duty, we will return, at once".

"Oh lord of my life ! You are a mighty hero and the greatest of warriors. You can carry out this task with the greatest ease but if you wish to see me alive you must come back without delay. Like a *Chataka* bird I shall be expecting your return day and night with an eager heart".

"Why are you so full of doubts and fears regarding my coming back ?"

"Dear Lord ! On account of the tremendous grace you bestowed upon me... on account of our happy union, surely

there will be a fruit and in such a case if you do not return in time people may think ill of me and censure me. It will be hard for me to face the world."

"What you say is absolutely true but I will come back as soon as possible."

Pavananjay tried his best to console Anjana and to remove her fears and doubts; yet he felt that she was not satisfied. Therefore, he gave her his signet-ring which bore his name and said, "If there is some delay in my coming back and if such a situation arises you may show this ring to people as a proof of my having met you. This will prevent people from censuring you."

Anjana felt a little relieved after she received the ring from Pavananjay. Of course, the calamity that was going to occur in her life in future had already cast its shadow on her heart, but what could she do? Pavananjay had to go at once.

After having taken leave of Anjana, Pavananjay returned to his camp on the banks of the *Manas sarovar*.

That night of her happy union with her husband remained a dream for Anjana. Her fears came true. Fate showed its colours and she became pregnant. Day by day, her beautiful body began to bloom like a sublime flower. Every organ of her body assumed new dimensions and new graces and became fascinating. Within a short time it was evident to everyone that she was pregnant.

No one in the city of Adityapur knew about Pavananjay's visit to Anjana on that night and their happy union. The people knew only that long years ago, soon after marrying her Pavananjay had abandoned her and that he had completely kept away from her. Therefore, when people heard that Anjana was pregnant, they were all greatly shocked. When they heard the news they were stupefied. Step by step this news assumed the form of a rumour and spread like wild fire throughout the city. The servant-maids in the palace began to whisper to one another about it. The people of the city experienced mixed

emotions. They were happy, sad and angry and they were silent. Queen Ketumati began to burn with anger. She began to entertain all sorts of doubts and suspicions regarding the chastity of Anjana. She went running to Anjana's chamber. At that time, Anjana was engaged in a delightful conversation with her dear companion Vasanta Tilaka. Their jocular conversation ended by Ketumati's angry and harsh voice. Queen Ketumati was questioning some maid there in a loud and angry voice :

"Where is that noble young lady Anjana ? She is a wretched pretender. She has stained the good name of our family". On hearing the voice of her mother-in-law, Anjana came out of her room slowly. She bowed respectfully to her mother-in-law with folded hands. Queen Ketumati was shocked to see her; and stared at her blooming body with eyes widened with shock. Her body which had grown full now added to her beauty. Ketumati began to burn with intense anger. She thundered with anger : "You wretched creature ! You have brought great disgrace upon our illustrious family. You have stained the honour of our family. Are you not ashamed of your conduct ? You have stained the honour of our family as well as the honour of your father's family. Oh ! We cannot bear this disgrace !"

"But revered mother ! Listen to me a little."

"What is there to listen to ? ... You will say that Pavananjay came and met you ! Oh you sinner ! For the last twenty two years, my son has not seen even your shadow. Poor fellow ! He kept completely away from you. He has been shunning you and has been saving himself from you. Yet you have blackened his face by your evil conduct unbecoming of our status. Tell me, you shameless creature ! Whose child is it?"

"Mother...." Anjana's eyes welled up with tears.

"Wretched creature ! To-day, your true nature has come to light ! All these days I thought that you were innocent and noble ! I used to pity you; and I used to curse my son."

"Mother ! I am absolutely pure and innocent. I am not at all guilty of any blameworthy conduct; nor have I committed any despicable act, which might stain the splendid name of our royal line. Your son came here on the night of the day on which he left the city on his march of victory. He came here accompanied by his friend, Prahasit; and then" Anjana said with a palpitating heart.

"Mother ! What Anjana says is absolutely true. I was, here at that time" Vasanta Tilaka said supporting what Anjana had said.

"Keep quiet ! Don't I know you ? You artful creature ! After all, are you not birds of the same feather ! Thieves stand by each other ! What have you done joining together ? I am not ignorant of your insidious nature ! All these days you were carrying on your tricks behind the curtains of pretence. To-day, your treachery has come to light; and you stand unmasked". Queen Ketumati said, giving vent to her raging anger.

"But I can produce evidence of Pavananjay's visit to me !"

"I have seen many truthful women of your kind. Are you trying to throw dust into my eyes ? Come on. Let me see what evidence you have !"

Anjana took off from her finger, the signet-ring that Pavananjay had given her; and placed it in her hands.

Queen Ketumati took the ring; looked at it turning it this side and that : and closely observed it. Then, she thought for a while. She returned the ring to Anjana : and said :

"Lewd women are expert liars. They are experts in cheating others by their concocted stories and by their contrived tricks. My son does not even like to glance at you. How could he have met you ? Ah ! What an excellent drama you are enacting ! Stealing; and over and above that lying ! But I am not going to be taken in by your treacherous tricks. You can cheat others by these false evidences and pretended purity; not me ! Understand ?"

Queen Ketumati's loud and angry voice reverberated in Anjana's chamber. The maids and attendants left their work; came and stood there trying to know what was happening.

"Get away, at once, from my presence; and do whatever you like. There is no place in our palace for a lewd woman like you. For a long time you have been throwing dust in my eyes; henceforth, your treachery cannot continue here."

Anjana felt as if the sky cracked and crumbled over her head. How long could she bear with those words that fell like hammer-strokes on her ears and which pierced her tender heart like poisoned arrows? She collapsed on the ground like an uprooted tree. Vasanta Tilaka tried to comfort her. She sprinkled cold water on her and fanned her with a fan; and made her regain her consciousness. But on account of bitter anguish and agitation she kept wriggling on the floor. She felt as if the whole world was reeling around her. The tears were streaming from her eyes. Her cries of anguish were echoed by every stone in the walls of the chamber;

"On lord of my life! When will you come and listen to my anguished cries? I implored you not to go back but you went away promising me that you would come back soon. I do not know when you will come and relieve me of my anguish.... Now, I am unable to show my face to anyone".

All those who had gathered there shed tears of compassion but Queen Ketumati did not care for Anjana's distress. She left Anjana there in a state of bitter distress and despondency and went straight to the chamber of King Prahlad placing steps violently and angrily. King Prahlad was amazed to see Queen Ketumati's angry and frowning face; and asked her :

"What's the matter?"

"We are completely ruined...."

He sat upon his throne and said in a serious tone, "I do not understand anything."

“What is there to understand ? Oh my lord ! Something unbelievable has happened. Whoever thought that such a thing would happen ? She whom I deemed all these days the goddess of our royal line has turned out to be a lewd woman. All these days, I thought that Anjana was a chaste, innocent and noble woman but now she has acted ignobly and has stained the honour of our family. She has shown herself to be an immoral woman. What shall I say to you ? In fact, I feel ashamed of telling you this disgraceful thing that has happened....she is pregnant!”

“Ah ! What did you say ?” King Prahlad, at once, shocked by this news, stepped down his throne. His face became wrinkled with shock and distress. He felt thunder-struck. Every word uttered by Ketumati pierced his heart like a sharp thorn. Yet he could not bring himself to believe it. He felt certain that Anjana who was an absolutely noble woman would not commit such an enormity. He felt certain that such a thing was not possible in the case of Anjana who was the daughter of the great king Mahendra and who was his daughter-in-law. His conscience repeatedly said, “This is not at all likely.”

“I have just now seen her and I have come from her chamber. What I said is literally true. Added to all this, she says that the child in her womb....belongs to Pavananjay but you know our son has not seen her face even once. He has always kept her at an arm’s length. We know that very well. When that is so how could her words be true ? How could she become pregnant ? Over and above all this, she shows Pavananjay’s signet-ring in support of her claim that our son has visited her.”

King Prahlad fell into a state of deep thoughtfulness. During the last twenty-two years he had not heard anything improper said against Anjana; nor had he seen anything improper in her, conduct and when he heard his Queen Ketumati complaining against her he could not believe his ears and there arose a tremendous commotion in his mind and heart. At once, he stood up in great vexation and said :

“What do you propose to do about it ?” Ketumati asked him breaking the silence, “I say that she should be sent out of our

palace. A lewd woman like her should not live anywhere in our territories. Let the sin in her womb bloom anywhere outside our territories. I have already asked her to get out of our palace and now you too....”

“It is not wise to grow impatient and excited over these things. It will not be proper to our royal family if we punish anyone without impartially examining the case. Moreover, this is not a case relating to a common citizen of our country. It is a question concerned with our royal family. Therefore, we should act with calmness and patience. Moreover, we have to discuss the matter with our relatives and King Mahendra. We have to be extremely cautious to see that no one in our country is unjustly punished; otherwise any unwise or hasty step that we may take will be a thorn in our flesh for ever.”

King Prahlad somehow managed to prevail upon Queen Ketumati to have patience. After she went away from there, he was lost in deep thoughtfulness. After thinking deeply for a long time, he arrived at a decision and sent word for his Chief Minister, Shilaratna.

As soon as he received the Kings' message the Chief Minister, Shilaratna came to meet the king. After the Chief Minister had taken his seat, the king said in a serious manner....”

“Dear Chief Minister, a very serious incident has taken place....”

The Chief Minister was silent. He did not utter even a single word.

“Anjana is pregnant. Queen Ketumati actually saw this. Of course until now this is known only in the palace but very soon....”

“My lord ! What do you propose to do ?” the Chief Minister said in a natural tone. The news of Anjana's pregnancy did not shock him; nor was he surprised by it.

"I do not know what to do. I do not have even the slightest doubt regarding Anjana's purity and nobility but at the same time it is also true that she is pregnant. It is also well-known to all of us that for the last twenty-two years Pavananjay has not even seen her face. Let alone seeing her face; he has not even seen her shadow. He has kept himself completely away from her. When that is so how could Anjana become pregnant?" King Prahlad explained the situation to his Chief Minister.

"What does Anjana say about it? What is her explanation? What does she say? Have you tried to find out her explanation? Have you been able to go to the roots of the matter?" The Chief Minister said this to understand the problem fully.

"Anjana has told Ketumati that Prince Pavananjay came to her chamber on the very night of the day on which he set off on his march of victory; that he spent the whole night with her and that he has given her his signet-ring as a proof of his having visited her and that the child in her womb belongs to him."

On hearing this the Chief Minister began to think about every detail deeply. Several thoughts rose in his mind. He had heard a lot about Anjana's nobility and chastity. He knew that Pavananjay had abandoned her. He had not heard even a single word of complaint or censure against Anjana so far. Not only this; the whole city knew very well that even in the absence of Pavananjay, Anjana was taking care of her chastity and purity. Till today, no one had noticed any defect either in her actions or in her words; and no one could point out any defect in her character and such a noble woman had now become a subject of censure.

The Chief Minister was silent. He began thinking...." "In life, may not even the best people commit a mistake knowingly or unknowingly? Sometimes one who has crossed a mighty ocean heroically, gets drowned in the back waters on the beach. Even a person who remains unshaken in the worst of calamities that rage like whirlwinds and tempests may be shaken in a weak moment and may soon lose all the grace and glory attained

through years of unflinching purity. In the same manner, Anjana who has been guarding her chastity with the greatest care all these twenty-two years might have committed a mistake. Is it not likely ? And now to cover up her mistake she may be uttering lies."

"Your Excellency, we should not act hastily and emotionally in this situation and we should not inflict unjust punishment upon an innocent person. If we do so later we will have to pay heavily for it. It would be good if you could give me a day's time for thinking over the matter calmly so that I may think about it and take some decision about it. I will carefully examine the situation. I will go into all the details of the case and tomorrow, I will meet you and tell you about my opinion".

"But, Queen Ketumati has ordered Anjana to leave the palace at once."

"Pardon me, Your Excellency ! It is not proper for the queen to interfere thus in matters relating to the polity and affairs of the state ?"

"Now, what is to be done ?"

"Please prevail upon the queen to have patience for one day. Tomorrow, anyway we are going to take a decision".

"If she does not pay heed to my advice what shall I do ?" said King Prahlad who knew very well the obstinacy of the queen.

"In that case, all the people of the city will be angry. They too desire to be satisfied with an explanation of the situation because the citizens and the members of the royal family have the highest regard for Anjana's indisputably sublime character. All have been adoring her as a *Mahasati*, a woman of absolute chastity and loyalty. In this situation, if we punish Anjana without taking the people of the city into our confidence and without convincing them of the justness of the step we take, there will be a terrible consequence, and we will be in an extremely difficult position. All will condemn us."

"Dear Chief Minister! What you say is absolutely right! The people of the city do not know that Anjana has become pregnant in the absence of Pavananjay."

Their discussion ended there. The Chief Minister returned to his residence after requesting the king to prevail upon the queen to have patience for a day and not to act unwisely in accordance with her opinion.

Shilaratna, the Chief Minister was indeed a gem of virtues besides being a man of sharp and incisive intelligence. He sent for a trusted spy of his by name Jayanad. Jayanad was absolutely devoted to the Chief Minister. Moreover, he was a man of exceptional intelligence and intellectual sharpness. He had displayed his exceptional, intellectual brilliance on many occasions and had impressed the Chief Minister greatly. Jayanad, at once, appeared before the Chief Minister. The Chief Minister looked at him; and smiled. He saluted the Chief Minister bowing his head and sat down on a seat as desired by the Chief Minister who suggested by means of a wave of his hand to be seated there. The Chief Minister explained to him all the details of the situation and asked him to secure all the essential information about it. Jayanad saluted the Chief Minister and went away to carry out his task.

The Chief Minister kept waiting for Jayanad. Six hours had passed after he had gone away. Yet he was not to be seen. The goddess of the evening was emerging slowly and was taking the world into her lap. Even then, there was no sign of Jayanad. The Chief Minister was greatly worried. His impatience and worry increased every moment because he had to take a decision on the basis of the information collected by Jayanad and then he had to meet the king and tell him about his opinion.

The night came on. The world on account of the day-long labour was getting ready to take rest. The first phase of the night had passed and the second phase had begun. The Chief Minister was waiting for his spy, Jayanad like a *Chataka* bird waiting for its mate. Just then someone knocked on the door of his chamber. The Chief Minister got up from his seat

and went forward a couple of paces. Jayanad entered the chamber.

“Have you been able to secure any vital information?”

“Yes my lord ! I have secured the information we wanted. I went straight to the palace of queen Anjana. All the maids and attendants in the palace were in great grief and anxiety. Their eyes had swollen on account of incessant weeping. From their conversation, I could gather that everyone of them had the highest regard for Anjana’s chastity and nobility and that their hearts were full of compassion for her. The order of Queen Ketumati that Anjana must leave the palace has made everyone of them angry and unhappy. Dear lord ! What shall I say ? It is not at all an exaggeration to say that all the people of the city have enshrined Anjana in their hearts as a goddess and have been adoring her with unshakable devotion.”

“What was the most important point that they mentioned in their conversation ?”

“When I asked a certain maid about it she said that she had been following and staying with Anjana like her shadow and that she had not seen any man enter her palace. Just then another maid said with a little anger, “Even if we assume that she wanted to commit such an enormity why should she have been suffering this anguish all these days ? If she had any such evil passions or desires in her mind or heart would she not have shown them at any time these twenty-two years through her actions and gestures”. A third maid said, “We cannot say when a man’s mind changes. It is absolutely likely that Pavananjay who went to the battle-field saw something that changed his mind. He might have come here in the night and might have returned in the morning.”

“Moreover, Vasanta Tilaka has always been with her mistress. She saw on that night with her own eyes Pavananjay and Prahasit... Would she also utter a lie ?” A fourth maid said this in all seriousness supporting what the third one had said. Jayanad continued; “Then I went to the backyard of the palace

where the guards live in a separate apartment. There, I saw some elderly guards sitting together and conversing. The guard who was formerly guard at the door of his Highness' palace and who after Anjana's arrival in Adityapur was appointed to watch at the doors of Anjana's palace was saying to his friends, "Brothers ! This is really unjust. Princess Anjana is being censured without any reason. I have been here for so many years but I have not seen Anjana talking with any man. She does not know what decorations are ; nor have I seen her humming a tune at any time. The accusations made against her by Queen Ketumati are totally baseless. When I heard about it my heart broke into pieces. But what can we do ? Great people have their own ways. We cannot interfere in these matters." Saying this the old man wiped his tears with his uppercloth.

"From there, I went straight to the seventh storey of the palace."

"Did not anyone stop you from entering the chamber ?" The Chief Minister asked him speaking in the middle.

"No, no one stopped me on my way. I went there without any hitch or hindrance. The reason was nobody noticed me. All were forgetful of their surroundings lost in deep agitation and grief. Moreover, they were grieving over the sad prospect of Anjana's leaving Adityapur in a couple of days. Since they were all deeply thinking about this, they did not notice me. And when I entered Anjanadevi's chamber, the heart-rending sight I saw there stupefied me. I was indeed stunned by the sight. It was indeed a miserable sight. Anjana has fallen upon evil days. She had been weeping endlessly. The tears in her eyes had not dried up. Her eyes had swollen with incessant weeping. Her dear companion Vasanta Tilaka was trying her best to comfort Anjana. Her eyes also were swollen with weeping. Every word she uttered was of great significance and also every word she uttered was revealing. When a person is suspected of having been guilty of something, the truth can be known from that person's confidential conversation with his or her close associates or friends. That can be used as a basis for solving the problem; and that can help us to go to the roots of the problem."

Jayanad said this explaining the secret method of testing someone's character or propensities.

"Every word uttered by her was charged with sorrow and filled with pain; and was also prompted by unexpressed anger. Addressing Anjana, she said, "Dear friend ! Truly this world is despicable. It is worthy of being despised; otherwise would not the great Queen Ketumati realize your true nature having seen the way in which you lived all these twenty-two years ? If the queen were to be in your position, she would have realized how painful it is to spend twenty two years of one's youth in separation from her lover. She would have realized how difficult it is for an innocent young lady to spend so many years in anguish abandoned by her husband. She would have realized how you have spent these twenty two long years in great anguish controlling your thoughts and feelings. Not only she; no one else in this world can realize the extraordinary suffering you have undergone. Yet we cannot get on without courage. God sees the truth but waits. Heaven is far away but not dark. When Pavananjay comes back and when he comes to know that in his absence these people have abandoned you and banished you and that you have been forced to knock about from pillar to post; that you have been forced to leave this house then these people will have the tables turned against themselves. When they hear the truth from Pavananjay's lips they will be ashamed of having ill-treated you thus and will bow their heads in shame. They will not be able to face anyone afterwards. If on that night Pavananjay had met King Prahlad or Queen Ketumati or the Chief Minister, Shilaratna or somebody else this calamity would not have arisen. But who can prevent what is destined to occur. After all, at the end, the truth shall win the victory. This is certain."

"It seemed as though the dark night of your desperation and distress had come to an end and that the sun of your happiness and peace was going to rise; but no ! Yet the ordeal is not over. The true test is going to take place now. Really misfortune has been running at our heels like a shadow day and night and we have to face it". Again Vasanta Tilaka's eyes began to

well up with tears. Her throat was choked. She was greatly grieved and vexed by the calamity that had overtaken her dearest friend Anjana. She wiped the tears that were streaming down her cheeks."

The Chief Minister, Shilaratna was listening to Jayanad's narration with deep concentration. After having heard the entire story, he made a sign with his hand suggesting that Jayanad might leave the chamber. After he went away, the Chief Minister was lost in deep thought. He thought, "Undoubtedly Anjana is innocent... She is absolutely chaste and pure. She has not committed any enormity. Surely, Pavananjay should have come on that night and met her. The child in Anjana's womb is his; not anyone else's. There is no room for any doubt in this matter. But the greatest problem now is to convince Queen Ketumati of the truth. Her mind and heart are now completely filled with doubts and suspicious regarding Anjana's chastity and wifely purity. How can her doubts and suspicions be removed? How can she be made to realize and accept the truth." The night had far advanced. The second phase was over and the third phase had begun. The whole city of Adityapur was asleep, but he could not get a wink of sleep. The Chief Minister's heart began to shake with compassion when he thought of Anjana's anguish. How good it would be if he could prevail upon Queen Ketumati to realize the truth but she might not realize the truth in spite of all that he might say.

The Chief Minister slept reciting *Shri Namaskar Mahamantra*. He did not know when he had slept. A few hours later there appeared the saffron-coloured radiance of the sun in the east. Cool breezes were blowing slowly. Birds began to twitter in the trees. Animals began crying as a sign of their waking from sleep. The sweet sounds of bells rung in the Jin temples in Adityapur filled the air. After having carried out his morning ablutions and duties the Chief Minister set out for the royal court.

King Prahlad and Queen Ketumati were waiting for the arrival of the Chief Minister. The Chief Minister entered the court; saluted the King and sat in his seat.

There was silence everywhere. It was like the silence of the burial-ground. Queen Ketumati said breaking the ice: "Honoured Chief Minister! We should now turn away Anjana from our city without a moment's delay". Even now she was angry. Her anger had not abated.

"Honoured queen! We should act as you suggest, if we find that Anjana is guilty". The Chief Minister who was old and experienced spoke in a voice that rumbled like the roar of a sea.

"What is your opinion? Don't you deem her an offender?"

"Noble queen! I have gone to the roots of the matter and according to my information. Anjana is absolutely innocent".

"Oh! How is it possible? She is an offender. There can be no doubt about it. She is a treacherous woman; a sinner of the worst kind. Where is the need for examining this case at all? This is as clear as the sunlight that for the last twenty-two years my son has not even glanced at her face. When that is so how could there be a meeting? How can there be any question of their happy union?"

"Cannot affection arise in the heart of Pavananjay for Anjana?"

"Yes! Affection can arise! But I do not want the honour of our royal line to be stained under any circumstances. I do not like the name of our family to be stained in the eyes of the world. People believe that Pavananjay even by a mistake has not spoken even a word to Anjana during these twenty two years. They cannot believe that he visited her on that night. Anjana became pregnant after Pavananjay went away to the wars. Under these circumstances, what else can we get from the people except derisive laughter and ridicule, except disgrace. Our royal line whose honour has been resplendent has today been stained".

"If we can convince all people of the truth where will be any room for ridicule or disgrace? The question of the honour of our royal line being stained does not arise".

“Dear Chief Minister ! I greatly honour you. You are like my father, but do not be misled by false evidence and do not try to prove that she is innocent. Do not try to whitewash her character which has been stained. I knew very well that without some solid, valid, reason my son Pavananjay would not have treated her thus with contempt and dislike. He has not told us what he knew about her lewd nature and immoral character. He must have secretly tested her character and he must have found some reason, some evidence; and that was why he adopted such a harsh and bitter attitude towards her. Added to all this at the time of his march of victory he reprimanded her and slighted her. Under these circumstances, how can we believe that he came here that very night and had a happy union with her ! How can we believe that he stayed with her for a night and went away without meeting anyone else ? Her story is absolutely false. It is nothing but a cock and bull story”.

Queen Ketumati stuck to her guns.

“Oh Queen ! then do you suggest that we should expel her from our city when she is pregnant, when another life is taking shape in her womb ? Don't you think that banishing her now in this condition is an inhuman act ? If we turn her out in this condition will it not bring disgrace to our royal family ? Can we face the world afterwards ? We cannot say for certain that. Pavananjay has not visited her that night ? Even the *Vidhata* (creator) does not know when a man's mind changes. When that is so how can we, ordinary mortals know it ? According to my deep scrutiny and examination of all the circumstances Anjana is absolutely pure and innocent and Pavananjay stayed with her on that night. Not only this; he spent a whole night with her happily. Noble queen ! You must have a little patience. Where is the need for a mirror to see one's palm. The whole thing will be clear when Pavananjay comes back”.

King Prahlad was silently listening to the conversation between the Chief Minister and the queen, with deep concentration. He thought deeply for a while and said;

“We should not act in a hurry in deciding whether Anjana is innocent or guilty. It is essential that we should think about it deeply and understand the situation thoroughly. Moreover, whatever decision we take, we should take it only after the arrival of Pavananjay and only after hearing his evidence. This is the right step; yet in order to satisfy our queen and in order to see that no injustice is done to Anjana, I will suggest a via-media measure”.

“What is it ?” Ketumati asked at once.

“We shall send Anjana to her father’s house. There she will not have to face any kind of distress or anguish. Meanwhile, Pavananjay also will come here. This will solve all problems”, said the King.

Ketumati gave her silent consent to the King’s suggestion. The Chief Minister also was silent. He did not make any comment; nor did he raise any objection.

King Prahlad ordered his commander to arrange for Anjana’s visit to Mahendranagar. Accordingly, Anjana and Vasant Tilaka were sent to Mahendranagar.

XXII

THIS IS SAM SAR

With all her ambitions and aspirations thwarted and frustrated, in deep despair and anguish, Anjana sat in the chariot. Her eyes were streaming with tears. She heaved a long and heavy sigh. All her sweet dreams of a happy and prosperous life had been shattered. A dense cloud of deep despair had enveloped her life.

The *Samsar* deems the life of an individual a sport. It treats the individual as a toy; and endlessly keeps playing with his life. Queen Ketumati also played with Anjana's life thus. She teased her; taunted her; tortured her mentally and in consequence, Anjana had to go away to her father's house.

The commander of King Prahlad drove the chariot slowly; and began proceeding in the direction of Mahendranagar. Vasant Tilaka felt that the departure of her dear friend, Anjana from her father-in-law's house was a terrible calamity; and that all her hopes were completely shattered. She felt that Anjana had lost everything in life. She covered her face with her hands; heaved a deep, cold sigh; and fell at the feet of Anjana.

Nine months had not yet passed since Pavananjay had met Anjana; but even before that fate had trampled upon her enthusiasm, zest, ambition and aspiration and had crushed them to pieces. The life of Anjana in whose womb a new life was blooming and assuming a shape, became a desert. How could she bear with her desperation and frustration? She had been cherishing splendid desires and aspirations but cruel fate shat-

tered all her dreams and threw them into the dust. Now, when the time had arrived for the fulfilment of her deeply cherished hopes and aspirations she was compelled to leave her husband's house.

The enlightened great men say that this is the nature of *Samsar* and that one should not have any faith in it. It is transient like the bubbles on water. We cannot say when the bubbles break and disappear. What is union? What is separation. All these are the sports of fate: "We are here as on a darkling plain, swept by confused alarms of struggle and flight where ignorant armies clash by night". Such is the nature of *Samsar*. Unions and separations seem to be the sports that fates play with the lives of human beings. When a mighty tempest rages over the sea, when whirlwinds appear, the sea waves rise sky-high, unite, embrace each other and then in a moment they are separated. This is the nature of life also. But when can this great truth, this eternal truth bring peace and felicity to the *Jivas* that are caught in the snares of infatuation and are being consumed in the flames of attachment and hatred? How can this eternal truth bring peace to man when he has been caught in the consuming flames of attachment and hatred which have been burning him for countless lives. No, it cannot. This will be possible only when man attains some firmness and equanimity. Man must seek the spiritual refuge of some *Yogis* and must think about these things with a calm mind.

Of course, Anjana lost everything that was hers. She fell into the abysmal depths of distress and despondency. Yet she could not forget those few sweet words of promise and assurance that her husband had spoken to her at the time of their happy union on that night. Again and again, she sought comfort and solace in the thought that Pavananjay would surely come to her and would shower the nectar of love upon her heart which was fading away like a fallen flower.

Of course, for twenty-two years she had lived in absolute desperation, without any hope of being reunited with her husband and then in her life that had been enveloped by the dark,

dense cloud of despair, there had flashed unexpectedly a radiant lightning which brought her heavenly felicity and it had disappeared immediately. But Anjana in the light of that lightning-flash had visualized the possibility of a prosperous and felicitous future. But now her future seemed bleak and blighted but still she kept hoping against hope believing that hope would create out of its own wreck the thing it contemplated.

The chariot moved slowly in the direction of Mahendranagar passing through villages, towns and districts, through woods, plains and forests. The commander who was driving the chariot was maintaining absolute silence. Even he was plunged in absolute grief. After sometime Anjana and Vasant Tilaka became deeply absorbed in a meditation upon the *Pancha Parameshti*. They could hear nothing on the way except the wild roars and howls of the animals of the forest and the soft and melodious cries of the birds flying over them. Everywhere silence prevailed. Now and then, they could hear the neighing of the horses. Sometimes they could hear the charioteer heaving long sighs of pain and grief.

When the sun was setting in the west, the chariot reached the outskirts of the city of Mahendranagar. The charioteer pulled the reins and slowly the chariot came to a halt. The commander got off the chariot with his heart palpitating. He bowed to Anjana and his eyes welled up with tears and the tears streamed down his face.

Assisted by Vasanta, Anjana alighted from the chariot.

“Dear mother ! Kindly pardon me. I am only like a slave carrying out the commands of the king”. He could not say anything more. His voice was choked with emotion. His face grew pale. He could find no words to give expression to his thoughts and feelings.

“Noble man ! You have not caused any harm to me. You are merely doing your duty. All this is the result of my own sinful *Karmas*. Please do not agitate yourself”. There was deep silence for a while. Absolute stillness prevailed everywhere. Within

a few moments, the commander bowed to her again; and at once drove away in the direction of Adityapur. Within a few moments, the chariot disappeared beyond the trees and hills. The commander went away leaving those two helpless women near the city of Mahendranagar.

The sun had already set. Probably he could not bear to see the anguish and agitation of Anjana, a woman of the royal family standing there in absolute helplessness. When some noble people or enlightened people are experiencing anguish and agony others cannot bear to see them.

“Let us take rest here for the night. Tomorrow we shall plan out what we have to do”. Anjana said to Vasanta Tilaka in a low and depressed tone.

“But how can we stay here in the night. This is a wild and desolate place”. Vasanta Tilaka said frightened by the wild and desolate surroundings.

“Vasanta ! You need not fear anything. When we have with us *Shri Namaskar Mahamantra*; and when it keeps reverberating in our heart we need not fear anything”. Hearing these words of Anjana expressive of courage and confidence Vasanta became silent.

When Anjana looked around, she remembered some past events and scenes.

“Vasanta, proceed”

“But where are we to go ?”

“Nearby there is an old temple of Lord Rishabhdev. In my girlhood, I used to go there to have a *darshan* of the Lord. Come on ! Let us go and have a *darshan* of the lord today also”.

The darkness of the night had fully enveloped the earth. Dense darkness had enveloped everything. Nothing was visible in that darkness but Anjana was absolutely fearless. She was not unfamiliar with this place. The two ladies held each other's

hands and proceeded slowly. Just when they had placed a few steps ahead they could see the obscurely visible outlines of the temple at a distance. Anjana's heart suddenly overflowed with an indefinable delight. They approached the temple; uttered the expression, "*Namo Jinanam*" and entered the temple. When they saw the fascinating image of Paramatma Rishabhdev their hearts danced in delight like peacocks at the sight of rain-bearing clouds. The ghee wicks in the lamp were giving out a dim light and even in that dim light they could see the splendid image of the Paramatma. The sight of the image filled them with a sublime elation.

Both the ladies bowed to the image with devotion; and then sat down in front of it. Then they began to sing songs of glorification in honour of the Paramatma.

Oh Lord ! thou art an ocean of grace;
Sublime compassion flows, from thy face;
Bestow peace and felicity upon, all;
Witness my fears and deliver me from my anguish;
Thou son of *Nabhi*; I salute thy feet;
Bestow peace and felicity upon all.

Their tender voices emerging from their anguished hearts rose like lofty waves and filled every nook and corner of the temple and reverberated throughout the temple. The wicks in the lamp that were burning low suddenly became bright and resplendent and tender smiles appeared on the face of the Paramatma. The sweet and melodious voice of Vasanta Tilaka reverberated in the atmosphere and made it look heavenly.

"Steeped in sins

I have not attained any light !

Oh Treasure-house of grace !

Steeped in grief;

I have been wandering aimlessly;

Give me refuge

At your holy feet !

Then the two ladies began singing together.

Bestow peace and felicity on all;

Bestow peace and felicity on all;

Anjana's eyes welled up with tears. The pearl-like tears rolling down her cheeks symbolized her tale of agony and anguish and her inexpressible misery.

May we attain *Kevaljnan*

By virtue of our heartfelt devotion.

Reveal thyself to us

And dispel our distress !

Oh treasure-house of compassion;

Oh thou spring of sublime love !

After having sung those songs of glorification, the two noble ladies prostrated before the Paramatma and meditated upon him with devotion to attain his inconceivable grace; and then they came out of the temple. When they looked around, they noticed at a short distance a small cottage built of sticks and leaves. They approached the cottage. There was no one in it; it was vacant. They thought for a while and then decided to spend that night in the cottage. Vasanta Tilaka collected some grass and leaves from the surroundings. She made a bed out of them for Anjana. Anjana lay on that bed of leaves and she slept lying down at her feet.

But how could Anjana get sleep ? She lay on her bed of leaves looking at the sky with fixed eyes. She felt that all her ambitions and aspirations had been crushed down by the cruel *Samsar* and when she thought of it, the tears streamed forth from her eyes. Her heart seemed to be breaking into pieces. She tried to forget her anguish in meditating upon Lord Rishabhdev but she could not forget her misfortune which followed her like a dreadful shadow.

She thought, "Tomorrow when I go to my father's house I will have to face boundless disgrace and humiliation. Will my mother and father, brothers and sisters-in-law receive me with sympathy ?" A cloud of doubts and fears hovered over her mind

and disappeared. Every moment her anguish and agitation increased. So she again vainly tried to meditate upon the Paramatma but how can a person experiencing bitter anguish have any peace of mind ?

In the last phase of the night, she dozed for a while. As soon as it was dawn she opened her eyes. She rose from her bed of leaves and stood up. She woke up Vasanta Tilaka and both came out of the cottage. Then having completed their bath they went into the temple; had a *Darshan* of Bhagwan Rishabhdev and then proceeded slowly towards Mahendranagar. When the two ladies approached the gates of the city, they stopped suddenly. Easily and spontaneously, they were lost in sweet reminiscences of the golden hours, they had spent there in their childhood. Their hearts overflowed with joyful emotions. For a while, they forgot the present and began to range joyfully through the world of their reminiscences but how long can anyone live in the world of reminiscences ? Very soon, they have to descend from their dream — world to the dreary world of reality.

Summoning up some strength they entered the courtyard of the palace. At the magnificent entrance of the palace there stood a guard keeping a vigilant watch. When he saw Princess Anjana coming towards the door, bare-foot with Vasanta Tilaka, unexpectedly he was shocked and he was filled with all sorts of doubts and fears. He came forward a few steps and said in an agitated voice :

“Dear princess ! What is this ? You have come alone thus?”

When Anjana heard the words of the guard she felt as though the earth gave way under her feet. She stood petrified with her eyes fixed on the ground. She had no words to give a reply to his question. Somehow a few moments passed. Then Vasanta Tilaka narrated to him briefly the calamitous events that had occurred in Adityapur. Hearing what she said the guard felt greatly shocked. He entreated them to be seated there and ran in to inform King Mahendra of their arrival.

King Mahendra was taking rest sitting in an easy-chair. The guard went in; saluted the king and informed him of the arrival of the princess and her companion. The king asked him for details and then he narrated to the king what he had heard from Vasant Tilaka. King Mahendra was shocked and stupefied to hear that painful story. He became greatly agitated and worried. There arose in his mind countless inauspicious thoughts and produced a commotion. He thought :

“It has been said that the heart of a woman is too deep to fathom”. Actually the character of women is an incomprehensible riddle. My daughter has brought disgrace upon my family. She has stained my name and blackened my face. It is not unknown to us that during these twenty-two years Pavananjay has kept himself completely away from Anjana. He never tried even to approach her. When that is the case how could she become pregnant ? It is certain that this wicked girl has committed this sin taking advantage of Pavananjay’s absence from the palace. King Mahendra was worried only about the disgrace that his family had to face. His face became wrinkled with worry and agitation. Prince Prasannakirthi who was standing nearby soon understood his father’s mind. He came to a decision and said :

“Dear father ! Turn away this immoral woman from our doors”.

“But ?”

“No ! Dear father ! This is not a time for thinking. Do not we cut off that part of our body which has been bitten by a cobra ? We do so even if it is our own hand or leg or toe”.

Prince Prasannakirti was known for his love of justice. He was also a man of intelligence and wisdom. He was reputed throughout his kingdom for his heroism and valour but the Chief Minister did not at all approve of his solution to the problem that had arisen on account of Anjana’s return from Adityapur. Being silent for a while, the Chief Minister said politely :

“Dear king ! When a girl has to experience torture in her mother-in-law’s house and when injustice is done to her the only refuge for her is her father’s house”.

“But dear Chief Minister ! How can we give refuge to this sinner ? How can we allow this despicable woman to enter our house ? She has stained the honour of our family”. Prasanna-kirti said in an excited manner.

“Dear prince ! You are renowned for your knowledge, intelligence, wisdom and love of justice. You please tell me how and on what basis you have concluded that Anjana is a sinner? Is it not likely that she is innocent ? Do we not know that Anjana’s mother-in-law is a harsh and heartless woman ? Is it not possible that Ketumati has made this false accusation against her ? Therefore, I entreat you to give shelter to Anjana in Mahendrapur and to take care of her. Please do not forget, oh king ! that Anjana is your daughter and that your blood is flowing through her veins”.

Hearing the words of the Chief Minister, Prasannakirti became silent. He could not say anything but the Chief Minister’s words gave no relief to the worried mind of King Mahendra :

“Dear Chief Minister ! I agree that in this world we hear about such harsh and heartless mothers-in-law as Ketumati but we have not heard such a story as that of Anjana. We have not heard about such a daughter-in-law. The child in her womb cannot be Pavananjay’s because we have heard that for the last twenty-two years he has not even glanced at her, let alone meeting her. He always treated her with bitter contempt. Therefore, I think that the step that Ketumati has taken is proper and that she has taken the step after careful thinking”.

We cannot say what a high place of importance King Mahendra gave in his mind to noble conduct and noble thoughts. But his noble heart was not willing to be shaken by seeing Anjana. “Of course Anjana is absolutely innocent. She has not committed any sin”. Though he knew this truth and though his heart shook with compassion when he thought that Anjana

had been falsely blamed and thrown into the abysm of disgrace, his heart began to palpitate. His mind was filled with inexpressible agitation and grief. Yet he took a hard and cruel decision not to give shelter to Anjana in Mahendrapur. He decided to do his duty trampling down the promptings of his heart. But this justice dispensed by the king and the moral values which he tried to respect were absolutely one-sided. The partiality for nobility and lofty virtues is a necessary thing but it should be limited to one's own self.

But we should not adopt this attitude of unbudging partiality for moral and ethical excellence with respect to others because such an insistence on ethical excellence in others may cause total injustice to others or it would cause harm to others. It is not proper and just to disgrace other *Jivas* or to look down upon them misled by rumours and malicious scandals without carefully examining the situation and circumstances. A just judgement should not be based on rumours and scandals. Those people who disgrace others believing rumours and malicious scandals, gather terribly sinful *Karmas* and when those sinful *Karmas* bring about their effect in a later *Janma* they will have to weep shedding blood from their eyes; not tears. In other words, we should not pass any judgement upon others; nor should we condemn others merely on the basis of some rumours and scandals. We should make a careful and impartial examination of the situation; understand all the facts about it and then we should pass a judgement on the person concerned.

Of course, the misfortune of Anjana blinded King Mahendra to realities and so his judgement was not just and fair. By passing such a judgement, he threw himself into the cruel claws of sinful *Karmas* from which he could not easily get liberation.

“Your Excellency, please do not forget that your blood is flowing through every vein of Anjana and that she was brought up in the highly cultured atmosphere of Mahendrapur. For years, during her girlhood, she lived in your family and received instruction and inspiration from her elders to lead a life of absolute nobility, chastity and culture. We have seen her per-

sonally growing from childhood to youth, and the foundations of her character have been laid in our presence, under our guidance in accordance with the lofty traditions of our royal family. We never noticed any blemish in her words, conduct, character or behaviour. Actually, Anjana is a woman of unquestionable chastity, sanctity and nobility. When that is so why should you punish her ? What is her sin ? What crime has she committed?" The Chief Minister said in a serious manner raising his voice a little. He did not fear even the king's displeasure in stating what he considered just and right but his words of wisdom did not have any effect on the mind of King Mahendra. He stuck to his own opinion. At once, he sent for the guards and gave them an order.

"I do not even like to see her face. Send away that evil-faced one at once out of our territory. Moreover, ask our official announcers to announce with drum-beats throughout our kingdom that no one should give her shelter in our country".

"But your Highness....."

"No ! Dear Chief Minister ! Today, I will not listen to your advice. Everything has its limits. A sense of propriety is essential in everything. Do not try to save that false woman. The earth may turn upside down. The sun may rise in the west instead of the east. Heavy rain may fall in a desert where no rain falls but I will not change my decision regarding Anjana. I am not going to listen to anyone's advice, regarding this matter". King Mahendra's face became red with anger and excitement.

The helpless guard felt extremely unhappy. When he found that he had to carry out the painful action of turning out Anjana who had been hungry and thirsty for days and who was in great anguish his heart shook with pity and horror. Yet, he could not ignore the command of the King. After all the king's commands had to be carried out. He helplessly decided to carry out his duty. Oh ! Anjana who was helpless had to knock about from pillar to post. Who would give her shelter ? Her heart would break to pieces with agitation and anguish. As he thought of

these things the guard's eyes were filled with tears. He went slowly out of the Court. Vasanta Tilaka was eagerly waiting for his return. When she saw the guard returning with shaky steps and with tearful eyes she began to shake with doubts and fears. The guard approached them and stood near them with a bent head.

"Did you meet the king ? What did he say ?"

The guard had no reply to these questions. He found no words to utter. He stood still and silent.

"If the king has sent any message you can convey it to us without any hesitation", Anjana said.

"The king's orders are that you must at once...." The guard found it impossible to say what he had to say.

"That I must get away from here. Is it not so ?" Anjana said completing the sentence which the guard had left incomplete.

"Yes, dear princess ! That is the king's order", the guard said with his voice choked with emotion. Though he tried his best to control his grief he could not. He began sobbing like a child covering his face with both his hands.

Anjana said nothing more. She took Vasanta's hand in her hand and walked away from there.

The sun seemed to be pained by this sight; so as if unwilling to see her anguish he concealed himself behind a vast cloud. The sky became dusky. The winds became still. For a few moments, nature seemed to have contracted from her circumference. Everything in nature seemed to have come to a stand-still.

It was an evil day. Every citizen of the city wept bitterly over her terrible misfortune. Who would not weep over her misfortune ? Who would not curse her misfortune ? Which enlightened great man would not have cursed the shallowness and meaninglessness of the *Samsar* ?

Anjana walked slowly with staggering steps and with a broken heart along the streets of Mahendrapur and then proceeded towards the forest. She did not take any food or drink. She had entered the city of Mahendrapur with a hungry stomach and a thirsty tongue but she returned in the same condition. Her heart was full of grief. The tears streamed from her eyes. She began to weep aloud. Her heart seemed to be breaking. She felt her heart rushing into her month. Her anguish knew no bounds. On the way she sat on a stone.

Even the wild animals in the forest stood petrified by her loud and anguished cries. The birds stopped twittering. Their offspring stopped chirping in the nest. The birds that were sporting in the sky stopped their games as if shocked by her lamentation. It was as if all the animals and birds in the forest were grieved by her heart-rending cries. Vasanta Tilaka also was in deep grief. The tears streamed down her cheeks. She was greatly agitated by her friend's anguish. She could find no words to comfort Anjana. Like Anjana she too felt lonely, helpless and miserable.

Having rested there for a short while Anjana got up and began walking slowly. She was walking bare-foot exposed to the scorching sun-light. Sharp thorns pierced her feet, on account of walking bare-foot upon the flinty road, her tender feet began bleeding. Her body was bathed in perspiration.

It was noon. The sun emerged from behind the clouds and began to shine overhead. They continued to walk in the scorching sunlight. The gusts of hot wind burnt their skin. Walking thus in that scorching sun, they reached the outskirts of a city. They sat in the shadow of a huge tree to take rest.

"Shall we take shelter in some choultry in this city?" Vasanta Tilaka said in a tone of deep distress. Both were greatly tired. They did not have strength to place even one step more. They had not had even a morsel of food for the last two or three days. They thought that if they could get a shelter they could think of food later. As soon as Anjana agreed to Vasant Tilaka's suggestion they began walking towards the city.

They walked slowly and reached the city. There were two guards at the gates of the city. When they tried to enter the city the guard stopped them and said :

“You cannot enter the city”.

“Why ?” Vasanta said a little angrily.

“It is the king’s order that you should not be allowed to enter any city in this Kingdom and that no one should give you shelter”.

Anjana did not like to say anything. She was silent. She thought about the situation for a while and then turned back. She began walking towards the forest. After walking for some-time they reached a dense and wild forest. They noticed on the way a huge peepal tree. They sat in its shadow to take rest. Anjana’s heart throbbed in pain and anguish and she sobbed and wept. She thought again and again.

“How unfortunate I am ! My elders have punished me without finding out the truth. They have punished me but put off an examination of my situation. Ketumati has done what is good for her. She has expelled me as an immoral woman; and has thus tried to safeguard the noble name of her family; and my father.. He too has done something for which his relatives and the members of the royal family will praise him. I thought, at least, my mother would give me shelter. For a distressed woman her mother is the only support and shelter. Her mother is the greatest refuge for such a woman. But has my mother also thought of safeguarding the sanctity of the royal family ? But, of course, she has to abide by the wishes of my father. Dear brother ! Prasannakirti ! What is it that you can do in this situation ? and my husband, my dearest lover... my lord ! you are far, far away from me and you do not know the calamity that has occurred to me. You do not know into what a dreadful whirlpool of misery I have fallen. Since you are not here you too have not been able to help me. Friends have become foes. Relatives have become hostile and my in-laws have become out-laws”.

She kept thinking and weeping thus for a long time. She visualized every relative and friend of hers. She remembered everyone who had brought her up with affection, who had taken care of her and who had helped her in various ways. But all those people had become her enemies now. Someone has rightly said, "Friends and relatives throng your doors in prosperity but shun your doors in adversity".

This is the speciality of *Samsar*. Those very people for whom we make sacrifices cause our ruin. Really no other woman in *Samsar* can be so unfortunate and unhappy as I am. I am still living though I have been abandoned by my husband for so many years. If it were any other woman she would have committed suicide.

Just then Vasant Tilaka approached her and said, "You please be resting here. I will go about and see what food I can gather in the surroundings. How long can we continue to starve like this?"

Vasanta Tilaka disappeared among the shrubs and thickets in the forest. She wandered about here and there and found some fruits but there was no water anywhere nearby. Therefore, she went in search of water, a long distance. All of a sudden she saw a fascinating valley at the foot of a mountain. In the valley, there was a beautiful lake with pure and pellucid water. At a close distance, there was another beautiful valley. She was fascinated by the beautiful plants and trees in that valley. The sight of that valley filled her with delight. Suddenly an idea occurred to her, "We can stay here. This place is free from all dangers. We can safely stay here". At once she speedily returned to Anjana.

"Come on, let us go. There is a beautiful valley at a little distance from this place. It is surrounded by trees and plants on all sides and it is a safe place for us. If you agree to my suggestion we can stay there putting an end to our wanderings".

Very soon the two friends reached the valley. Seeing the beautiful valley, the green trees and plants, the tender creepers

and flowers Anjana was delighted. They entered the valley; ate the fruits which Vasanta Tilaka had gathered and drank the water of the lake to their satisfaction.

“Yes. We shall stay here. Somehow we can spend our days here”, Anjana said expressing her consent. Then the two friends took rest there for a while. The evening came. The sun had set. The two friends felt a little relieved and refreshed.

After having rested for a while they went about the valley to see whether it was a fit and safe place for their stay.

When they had gone a little distance in the valley they were amazed to see there a great Muni sitting in meditation. The two friends stood before him. They bowed their heads; folded their hands and saluted him.

After completing his meditation, the Muni opened his eyes and lifting his right hand, he blessed them saying”, *Dharmalabh*” (May you attain spiritual prosperity).

The two ladies again bowed to him with devotion. After being silent for a while Vasanta Tilaka began to speak. She had realized already that the Muni was not an ordinary man; that he was a great soul who had come down to earth in the guise of a sadhu. She thought that if she narrated to him the tragic story of her friend he might suggest a solution to her problem. She thought that the Muni would give them a proper direction and guidance and that her friend’s future would be bright.

“Oh graceful lord! Why has my friend fallen upon evil days? How long will her anguish continue? What kind of soul (*Jiva*) is growing in her womb? Why is she experiencing all this anguish?” and then, Vasanta narrated to the Muni the entire story of Anjana.

Amitagati was the name of the Mahamuni. He was a *Charan Muni* i.e., one who always kept travelling. He was a veritable ocean of compassion.

XXIII

ONLY ONE BLUNDER

Once there was a city by name Kanakpur. It was a large and beautiful city. King Kanakarath was ruling over the city. He was a man of exceptional intelligence. He had an unflinching faith in *Dharma* and an extraordinary partiality for justice and ethical excellence. He had two queens by name Kankodari and Lakshmivati.

Queen Lakshmivati had a deep devotion for and faith in Paramatma Jineshwardev. She had got a small but beautiful temple built in her palace and had enshrined in it the image of Lord Rishabhdev made of a precious stone called *Sphatika*.

She spent most of her time in that temple carrying out worship or other spiritual activities or austerities. She had a firm belief that one could attain prosperity in this world and felicity in the other world by means of the Paramatma's grace and that by his immeasurable grace the soul could become the supreme soul, after having conquered the inner enemies and could attain *Moksha*. That was her belief. She believed that human beings could attain fulfilment in their spiritual endeavours by means of the imperceptible and the immeasurable grace of the Paramatma.

Now-a-days, when a person goes to the temple of the Paramatma Jinendradev to worship him he has this idea in his mind, "The Paramatma does not give us anything but we have to attain happiness, prosperity and peace only by means of our own endeavours. Only our endeavours can bring us these fruits". This false notion in the mind of a *Jiva* prevents true devotion

and faith from arising in his mind. Moreover, such a man falls to achieve perfection even in his spiritual endeavours.

Probably she thought thus, "The power and position that we attain as rulers of kingdoms The progress and prosperity that we attain are all the result of the supreme grace of the Paramatha. It is by his grace that we attain position, power, prosperity and happiness. Therefore, we should renounce all things and dedicate them at the feet of the Paramatma". As a result of this kind of thinking eventhough she was a great queen she lived a life of self-sacrifice, benevolence and spiritual excellence. She was completely bathed in the sublime waters of devotion for the Paramatma. Every morning and evening regularly as a matter of essential duty she worshipped the Paramatma.

The queen invited famous musicians and singers of devotional songs and hymns; and when they sang songs and hymns at the appropriate times in the temple she became immersed in devotion and meditation. Gradually, a large number of other women also joined her in these austerities. King Kanakarath also whole-heartedly praised and admired Queen Lakshmivati's devotion for the Paramatma and provided to her all the conveniences necessary for her spiritual austerities and activities.

Within a short time, Queen Lakshmivati's palace became an abode of devotees. In the whole city, Lakshmivati was reputed not as the queen of the country but as a great *Shravika*. Everywhere in the city people admired her extraordinary piety and devotion. Any person in distress who came to her doors did not return empty-handed or disappointed; neither did those who came seeking help from her return disappointed. She helped everyone and extended proper hospitality to her guests with a happy mind and with equanimity and she also inspired in them devotion for the Paramatma. Queen Lakshmivati's fame and popularity easily inspired jealousy and hostility in the hearts of some people.

Queen Kanakodari could not tolerate Lakshmivati's fame and name. Queen Lakshmivati's devotion for the Paramatma and

her partiality for virtues pierced Queen Kanakodari's heart like thorns. She could not even bear the sight of Queen Lakshmivati. It is a rule in this world that two swords cannot lie in one scabbard. Kanakodari's jealousy and hostility for Queen Lakshmivati kept increasing day by day. She was always planning to do something that would disgrace Queen Lakshmivati. Her purpose was to disgrace Queen Lakshmivati somehow or the other and to make her so ashamed of herself that she would not be able to face the world. Is it not said that man can bear with the stroke of a sword; that he can bear easily with the rigours of severe spiritual austerities; and can bear cheerfully the ravages of hunger and thirst but that he cannot tolerate others' progress, fame and popularity ?

When a man cannot tolerate someone's progress or prosperity he begins to look for defects in that person. He tries to find out the defects or weaknesses in that person. Mortals do have weaknesses. A mortal who is free from all frailties is rare indeed. Weaknesses and vices are present in every *Jiva* to a greater or a lesser extent. Hence, jealous people indulge in the heinous activity of looking for defects in others and of making false accusations against them. As a result of this propensity, those people who deem themselves noble, capable and virtuous knowingly or unknowingly fall into the abyss of spiritual ruin. This is certain.

Kanakodari was determined to bring about the ruin of Queen Lakshmivati. In the beginning, she used the maids and attendants in the palace as pawns in her villainous game of chess and spread several mischievous and malicious rumours against Queen Lakshmivati. But all her attempts were like throwing dust at the sun to stain him. The people of Kanakpur were so full of admiration for Queen Lakshmivati and had given such a lofty place in their hearts to her that they were not prepared to give ear to anything said against her. On the contrary, people began to despise Kanakodari herself for her mean tricks and malicious attempts to disgrace Queen Lakshmivati.

Kanakodari moved heaven and earth to stain the character of Queen Lakshmivati but all her attempts were in vain. Though Kanakodari made countless attempts to disgrace Queen Lakshmivati, her radiant name and honour remained unstained in the hearts of people. In fact, day by day, the number of devotees thronging her palace kept increasing. Kanakodari's animosity against Queen Lakshmivati grew intense. She made several villainous plans to destroy Queen Lakshmivati's popularity. She thought carefully about it and then a plan occurred to her.

She sent for her maid Sulekha. Even she despised Lakshmivati. Therefore she used to help and assist Kanakodari in causing some disgrace or humiliation to Queen Lakshmivati. Actually, Kanakodari was the only support for Sulekha for everything.

"Sulekha ! I have thought of a plan", Kanakodari whispered something into the ears of Sulekha.

"What is it ?"

"On what does all the fame and popularity of Queen Lakshmivati depend ?"

"I do not know".

"Oh, you stupid creature ! Don't you know this ? All this is the result of her having that image of the Bhagwan. If that image is removed from there....."

"Well, well ! An excellent plan. Now, you need not worry about it. I will see that it is done. I will take care of everything".

"No ! That is not what you should do. I will do it myself, yes, what you have to do is something different".

"Tell me what it is ?"

"Somehow you must skilfully manage to bring that image here".

“All right, I will bring it here”.

The mahamuni by means of his supernatural powers was enabling Anjana and Vasanta Tilaka to visualize the events of their past *Janma*. When they found that they were seeing the events of their past life both began to look at them with deep concentration.

Again the scene changed.

In accordance with the suggestion of Kanakodari Sulekha put on the dress and decorations of a respectable woman and began to visit Queen Lakshmivati's temple regularly, every day. She too pretended to be deeply absorbed in the glorification of the Lord joining the others who had gathered there. She began to take a leading part in every devotional activity organised in the temple. She used to be immersed in the joy of hearing the songs of glorification and at all times she acted as if she was a noble *Shravika*. She began to take part in the worship of the lord at the three times every day and pretended to be full of devotion for the Paramatma. By means of this kind of pretentious behaviour she managed to earn the love and friendship of all the devotees that came to the temple.

Every day, she brought various glorious flowers and decorated the image of the Lord with them. She brought food, fruits and other offerings for the lord in large vessels. In the evenings, she came at the time of the *Arti* and sang songs of glorification for the lord. She spent most of the time every day at the temple pretending to be taking part in the various devotional activities. The result of all this was the people of the city began to praise Sulekha as much as they were praising Queen Lakshmivati. She made a deep impression even on the heart of Queen Lakshmivati and won her trust and confidence. Now, Queen Lakshmivati began to praise her heartily.

Sulekha began to feel that there could not be much delay in her attaining success in her sinful plan. She felt secretly happy. Once she said to Kanakodari with elation... “The time has come for the success of our plan”. One noon, she put on fine

and dignified dress and went to Queen Lakshmivati's temple with a large basket full of flowers.

It was noon. The people who had come to worship the Lord had left, for the most part. Only one or two remained there singing songs and hymns. The priest was sitting outside the sancto-sanctorum taking rest. Sulekha felt that this was the best opportunity to carry out her plan. She decorated the magnificent image made of the *Sphatika* gem, with flowers so cleverly that nobody could make out that it was being carried away. She put the image in her flower-basket. Then, with great caution and circumspection she came out of the temple. She saw the guards watching at the gate of the palace and as she did every day, on this day also, she smiled at them and then hurriedly made her way to the palace of Kanakodari. Kanakodari sat at the window of her palace waiting for her. When she saw Sulekha coming towards the palace, she swayed with delight. Sulekha made a sign to Kanakodari to follow her. Both went to a lonely and secret part of the palace.

"We are now safe."

"Dear friend! You never fail in whatever you undertake to do. You are always successful". Kanakodari said patting Sulekha's back.

"Look! It will be really a joy to see Queen Lakshmivati agitated and anguished on account of the drama I have enacted".

"How is it? I cannot say how it will be. When you see it you will understand. Do you know the capacity of your friend? Yet...."

"I say! Please wait. You will see it yourself. You will see when that event takes place!" she said boasting of her intelligence and cleverness.

Anjana and Vasanta Tilaka were extremely eager to know what happened next. They impatiently said, "Gurudev, what happened next?"

"The sun had declined to the west. The goddess of the evening was descending slowly and eagerly to embrace the earth and to envelop it in her folds. Queen Lakshmivati went to the temple to worship the Paramatma in the evening but she was thunder-struck when she found that the image of the Lord was not there on the golden throne on which it was placed. She stood petrified. The image that had been made of the *Sphatika* gem had disappeared. When she realized this, her heart began to palpitate with fear and anguish. She felt at sea and could think of nothing for a few moments. She stood completely shocked and stunned. She looked around in the room but nowhere was there even a sign of the image. She became terribly agitated. She came running out of the temple screaming in fear and agitation.... Alas! someone has stolen the image of the Paramatma". Just then, she noticed Sulekha coming towards the temple with her head bowed and eyes fixed on the ground. Her face was serious and sober. Her gait seemed to suggest something secret and ununderstandable. Hearing Queen Lakshmivati's scream, she came to her running.

"Oh Queen! What happened?" she said in a serious tone, pretending to have been greatly shocked and terrified.

"Oh! Sulekha. We have been robbed of our treasure. Some sinner has gained entry into our temple and has made off with the image of the lord". Anger and agitation were writ large on her face. ..

"Alas! Which sinner has done this evil thing? He has stolen away the image of the Lord!" Sulekha said pretending to be deeply agitated.

Soon, all the maids and attendants gathered there. The watchmen and the guards came running. They were all shocked and began to wonder who might have committed the theft; and how the image had been stolen; but no one could find out how it had been stolen; and who had stolen it. All were expressing their doubts and suspicions as if releasing arrows into the dark; but no one had any definite idea. Queen Lakshmivati was in

great anguish. Her anger and anguish knew no bounds. She decided not to take food until the image was traced. She sat in front of the empty throne of the Lord; and fell into deep meditation.

Sulekha and Kanakodari hid the image in a flower-basket; and went to a garden outside the city, taking it with them. They went to the back part of the garden taking extreme precaution to see that no one might notice them and suspect them. Instructing Sulekha to stand there keeping a watch over the place Kanakodari went out of the garden through the back gate. She went hurriedly to a place where all the rubbish of the city was heaped.

Kanakodari with her feet made a deep hole in the rubbish and buried the image in that hole. When she after having buried the image there, turned back and began walking towards the gate, she found that her pet parrot had flown away. She began to shudder with fear. Her heart palpitated. Her body was bathed in perspiration.

She saw behind her a sadhvi. Her name was Jayshree. Realizing that the sadhvi had noticed her evil action, she bent her head in shame.

But sadhvi Jayshree spoke in a very pleasing manner. She possessed a serene face. The emotion of compassion was surging from her eyes. She was young but she was wearing the dress of a sadhvi. She said in a serene voice;

"Noble woman! What a terrible thing have you done!" The Sadhvi said in a voice expressive of love and compassion. Kanakodari was silent. She could not speak even a word. What could she say? She was greatly ashamed of her evil action.

"You have committed a terribly sinful action in burying the image of the Paramatma, the supreme ocean of compassion in the rubbish. You have committed a terrible sin. Do you realize the nature of your enormity? You will have to experience the painful consequences of this enormity in this life as well as in your next life".

At once, Kanakodari felt deeply sorry for what she had done. She realized her blunder. She deeply regretted her action. Within a few moments the sweet and compassionate words of the sadhvi chastened her evil propensities. Her heart became pure and soft like a flower. At once, she took out the image from the rubbish heap. She cleaned it with the edge of her sari; touched its feet with overflowing devotion and placed it in her flower-basket. She saluted the sadhviji and proceeded towards the garden.

Sulekha was waiting for Kanakodari with great eagerness. When she saw her coming back she hurried towards her :

"Is it over ?" Sulekha asked her. But Kanakodari did not give any reply. She was silent. She began walking silently towards the city. Sulekha was, at a loss, to know what had happened. She began to entertain all sorts of doubts and fears. She silently followed her.

Lights were burning in the palace. The night had already set in. Kanakodari, instead of going to her palace, went straight to the palace of Queen Lakshmivati. The sight there was heart-rending. All were plunged in sorrow. Even the maids and attendants were steeped in deep anguish. They were speaking of various possibilities. The members of the royal family were worried about Queen Lakshmivati's fasting and refusing food. She had discarded food and drink; and sat in the temple, in deep meditation. She was deeply absorbed in a meditation of the Panch Parameshthi.

Kanakodari entered the temple. She took out the image from her basket; and placed it on the throne. She went to Queen Lakshmivati; placed her head in her lap; and began weeping bitterly.

Lakshmivati opened her eyes. She was delighted and elated when she saw the sacred image on its throne. She saw Kanakodari weeping aloud, with her head in her lap. She could not understand the reason for this. She wondered what the matter was. She lifted Kanakodari's head and made her sit up. Then,

she said in a serene voice; "Dear sister, Kanakodari ! What is this ? What happened ? Why are you weeping ?" But Kanakodari could not give any reply. She had nothing to give in reply except sighs, sobs and repentant tears. She wept bitterly. Her heart was filled with anguish. Her white, bright face had grown black and blighted with sorrow and repentance; and she was sobbing in deep grief :

"Dear sister ! Why are you weeping thus ? What happened?" Queen Lakshmivati asked her in a serene and tender manner. Kanakodari's eyes had grown red with weeping. A few moments passed. She stopped weeping only after she heard the comforting words of Queen Lakshmivati.

"Dear sister ! I have committed a great offence against you. I am so greatly ashamed of my action that I cannot even show my face to you". She again sobbed and continued :

"Sister ! It was I who stole the image of the Paramatma. On account of my sinful action, you have had to experience agitation and anguish. It would have been better if I had died before committing this heinous action". Even now she was sobbing and weeping. Her sorrow knew no bounds.

By this time, King Kanakarath, the Chief Minister, the commander and citizens gathered there. When they heard Kanakodari's words, they were all greatly amazed and shocked. They whispered to one another and began condemning Kanakodari. Queen Lakshmivati requested all those people except King Kanakarath by means of a wave of her hand to leave the place. Accordingly, all except King Kanakarath left the chamber. Queen Lakshmivati understood the whole situation and said in a non-committal way putting an end to the problem :

"Sister ! This is not your fault. *Jivas* who are in the power of *Karmas* sometimes commit such mistakes. You need not be agitated over this."

"No, no, sister ! All this anguish has resulted only from my blunder. I am a sinner. I could not tolerate your fame and

popularity. I felt jealous of you because every day countless devotional activities were going on in your palace and people were admiring you. I did not hesitate to do any evil thing to stain your honour and to disgrace you. But all my efforts have been, in vain. Everytime I had to face failure and finally I committed this enormity". Kanakodari said opening her heart to Queen Lakshmivati.

"Sister who can prevent what is destined to occur. What is the use of weeping now ? If mortals do not commit mistakes who else will commit them ? To err is human. Human beings commit terrible mistakes; and then they shed tears of repentance. Human beings naturally commit mistakes. It is not a great sin to commit a mistake but concealing a mistake is an unpardonable sin. You are plain and open-hearted. You have realized your mistake. Your greatness lies in this. You are not a sinner but you are like a traveller who has stumbled on the way. You have realized your mistake and you have become chastened by the fires of repentance. That is enough."

"No, no, dear sister ! There is nothing great or worthy in this. I am a wicked sinner. All this is the result of the advice given by a noble sadhvi. If I had not met that sadhvi, by chance, and if she had not given me that advice I would have committed a terrible sin".

"Do you know the sadhvi ?" Lakshmivati asked enthusiastically.

"I did not ask for her name; nor did I try to find out her whereabouts. But even now I remember her serene and smiling face, her clean white dress and her eyes radiating compassion. Even now, I can remember the kind and compassionate words she spoke to me. Her words keep echoing in my ears". Kanakodari said with a lofty feeling of devotion for the sadhvi.

"Then, we must meet her. We should receive her and honour her and treat her with hospitality. Otherwise, it would be a great mistake on our part".

Kanakodari's heart became soft and tender like a flower. She felt that she had begun to live a new life and that a tremendous spiritual change had taken place in her. She developed deep veneration for Queen Lakshmivati. There arose in her heart an extraordinary devotion for the Paramatma.

The night set in. Joy and jubilation filled the atmosphere in the palace.

But there was one person who had not recovered her mental peace. She was worried and agitated. And that was Sulekha.

A tremendous turmoil was raging in her mind. She was deeply grieved and agitated. She had helped Kanakodari in carrying out that sinful plan. So that feeling of guilt kept worrying her. She knew very well that Kanakodari had absolved herself of her sin by seeking Queen Lakshmivati's pardon. But she had not washed off her sin. She had not chastened herself thus.

In great worry and agitation, she kept walking up and down in the room. Sometimes, she tried to lie on her bed and regain her mental calmness but she could not. She tried to hum a tune to forget her agitation caused by her evil action but the more she tried to forget her sinful action the greater was the fire of agitation that kept burning her. Countless conflicting thoughts and feelings rose in her mind like waves and clashed against one another.

"What shall I do ? Where shall I go ? To whom shall I reveal my anguish ? Shall I speak the truth to her and shall I seek her refuge ? But what will she think of me ? I put on the guise of a *Shravika* and deceived her and now what will she think of me ? Of course, Kanakodari has revealed everything to Queen Lakshmivati. Now, there is nothing to hide from her. But as long as I try to conceal the truth I cannot have peace of mind. It is better to go to her and to confess the truth. Someone has rightly said, "Truth fears no danger".

It was past midnight. The whole city of Kanakpur was asleep. Silence and stillness prevailed everywhere. But Sulekha

could not get a wink of sleep. Thinking calmly for a while she went out. Walking silently she went to the palace of Queen Lakshmivati.

"Who are you ? Why have you come here at this time of the night ?" The guard at the door asked her in a harsh manner."

"I am Sulekha," she said in a calm tone.

"At this time of the night ?"

"I want to meet our noble queen !" She went near the guard and said. He knew Sulekha very well. He had seen her several times with Queen Lakshmivati taking part in the devotional activities such as worshipping the Lord and performing the *Arti* in the evenings. He also knew that she was Kanakodari's companion. So he permitted her to go into the palace. She approached the chamber of Queen Lakshmivati, and knocked on the door impatiently.

Queen Lakshmivati was still awake. Somehow, she was not able to sleep on that night. Her heart had been greatly moved by Kanakodari's candour and confession of her sinful action. This is the speciality of noble souls. If someone commits a mistake knowingly or unknowingly and makes a clean confession of it and if that person repents her action a great soul thinks of her virtues only; not her vices or weaknesses. Lakshmivati thought of Kanakodari's virtues instead of thinking of her vices or weaknesses. She felt elated by Kanakodari's confession. She just then heard a knock on the door and opened it.

"Who is it ?"

"Sulekha".

"Sulekha ! At this time of the night ?"

"Yes, my dear queen," saying this she came into the chamber and fell at her feet. She washed her feet with her tears.

"Oh ! What are you doing ? Why all this grief ?" Queen Lakshmivati said patting on the back of Sulekha affectionately.

But her words only made Sulekha weep more bitterly. She wept like a helpless child.

"Oh you mad creature ! Stop weeping. If somebody hears this"

"Let the whole world hear this. I do not care. Mother ! Kindly permit me to open my heart to you and to confess my sin". She said in a voice shaken with grief.

"But you have not told me the reason for your grief."

"Mother ! I am weeping out of repentance for my sin."

"Sin ! What sin have you committed ? I do not understand anything."

"I have committed the sin of stealing the image of the Paramatma and deceiving you."

"Sulekha ! It was not your fault."

"Honoured Queen ! You are indeed magnanimous. You may not see the blunder I have committed but it is a fact that I have deceived you and I have misused the trust and confidence which you reposed in me. Her throat was choked with emotion. Her anguish shook her.

"If I had not helped Queen Kanakodari this inauspicious event would not have occurred."

"Who can prevent the decrees of Destiny from taking effect ? What is done is done. You are unnecessarily weeping. Such mistakes do occur in human life. It is only to cleanse ourselves of such sins, that we worship the Paramatma. We should forget what has happened and seek the refuge of the Paramatma. This is an infallible measure that can save human beings from adversities which they have to experience in countless lives."

"Dear queen ! Kindly pardon me and deliver me from this distress. Only if you pardon me can I get rid of this anguish. You must give me atonement."

"You mad creature ! Who am I to suggest an atonement ? Tomorrow, in the morning we should go and meet the sadhviji. You must go and receive atonement from her. Now you sleep. The night has far advanced."

The guard gave the indication that it was '3' in the night.

Sulekha returned to her residence. She got some relief from her grief and agitation; but on that night, she could not get sleep. She had been greatly moved by Queen Lakshmivati's compassion and magnanimity. She felt as though she had begun to live a new life. She lay on her bed and tried to sleep but she could not get a wink of sleep. She began thinking of Queen Lakshmivati, Kanakodari and the Paramatma. She spent the whole night in these thoughts.

As soon as it was morning, Kanakodari came to Sulekha's room. She knocked on the door and called

Sulekha said from inside, "Yes, my dear queen. I am coming".

"Come soon; we have to meet the noble sadhvi."

Sulekha got ready at once; put on clean dress and accompanied Kanakodari to the palace of the Queen Lakshmivati.

"Let us go, I am also ready. But we have to wait a little. I have sent the guards to find out where the sadhviji is staying," said Queen Lakshmivati.

King Kanakarath also came there to see them. A little later the guard came; bowed his head to the King and said;

"Your Highness ! the noble sadhviji with all her companions is staying in the stables of Sunand, the merchant, in the northern part of the city."

The chariots were ready outside the palace. King Kanakarath sat in one chariot and in the other sat Lakshmivati, Kanakodari and Sulekha. The chariots proceeded to the mansion of Sunanda. Sunanda was one of the richest men of the city. Not

only that; he was loved and esteemed by people for his magnanimity, hospitality, intelligence and ability in practical affairs. Arya Jayashree was staying in his stables. Sunanda had permitted Arya Jayashree to stay in his stables for some time. He received information that the king with his queens was coming to meet Arya Jayashree. Therefore, he had made preparations to receive the king and his family with honour and hospitality.

The chariots arrived and halted in the courtyard before the magnificent mansion of Sunanda.

“Victory to the king !” Saying this Sunanda received the king with great honour. He scattered gold coins on the path of the king and received him into his mansion. The king smiled happily, pleased with the welcome that was given to him. Sunanda took the king and the queen to his stables.

The atmosphere in the stables was filled with the voices of the sadhvis, who were reciting some sacred verses in the morning. Sunanda said, “*Nisihī*” (a prescribed word to utter while entering religious places) and then entered the stables with the king and the royal family.

As soon as they entered the stables, they saw the noble sadhvi who sat there in the midst of other sadhvis. All saluted the sadhvis saying, “*Matthaena Vandami.*”

The stables echoed with the expression, “*Dharmalabh*”, uttered by the sadhvis to bless them.

All of them saluted the sadhvis and sat down.

“We hope that you are well and that your spiritual activities are going on properly,” King Kanakarath said in a humble voice.

“Oh king ! Our life of spiritual endeavours is going on very well by the grace of our Guru Maharaj. What impediments can be there in a place ruled over by noble kings like you. We are absolutely happy and pleased. Our spiritual activities are going on unimpeded”.

"Oh thou revered madam ! You have bestowed upon my family great compassion and an invaluable benefaction. When they were sinking into spiritual ruin you lifted them up and helped them to pursue a lofty path," King Kanakarath said with gratitude.

"Oh king ! What benefaction have I bestowed upon them ? I have merely done my duty. Every *Jiva* always makes some spiritual progress according to its ability ...every *Jiva* always endeavours to get rid of sins."

"No, that is not the case. Kindly pardon my impoliteness. Whatever may be the spiritual potentialities of a *Jiva*, those potentialities which are latent cannot manifest themselves without the help of some great people like you", King Kanakarath said explaining the importance of a great opportunity in life.

"Oh king ! The faith you have in God and the Gurumaharaj, makes you say so and what you say is also true."

For sometime, there was silence everywhere. Meanwhile, Kanakodari bowed to the sadhvi and said in a humble manner, "Revered one ! Be so gracious as to suggest an atonement for my sin."

"Noble lady ! You began pursuing the path of spiritual purification when you discarded that path of unrighteousness and yet you have to seek atonement for your sin from the Acharya Bhagwan. Only he can suggest the atonement; not I. We do not have the right to suggest atonements. Of course, this is the greatest atonement that you can make for your sins. From today onwards you begin pursuing and adoring the path of spiritual elevation prescribed by the Paramatma and you begin to carry out spiritual endeavours utilizing your transient body for the purpose."

"Oh Lord ! What happened next ?" Anjana and Vasanta Tilaka who had been listening with deep concentration to the narration of the occurrences of their previous *Janma* made by the great Muni Amitagati, said eagerly.

“Later Kanakodari and Sulekha began to lead the life of great *Shravikas* and in course of time they died and were reborn in the first heavenly world”.

“Then ?”

“After that Kanakodari’s soul took birth in this world as Anjana, the daughter of King Mahendra and her companion took birth as Vasanta Tilaka.” The two ladies were greatly amazed and delighted to hear this story of their *Purvajanma*. After hearing the sacred words of the great Muni they were overwhelmed with joyful emotions.

XXIV

THE BRIGHTNESS OF THE MORNING

The two ladies sat silent and stupefied for sometime after hearing the story of their *Purvajanma*. Countless thoughts and feelings rose like mighty waves in their hearts, clashed against one another and subsided. Vasanta Tilaka folded her hands; saluted the muni and said....

“Oh lord ! What kind of *Jiva* is growing in the womb of my friend ? Be so gracious as to tell us this”.

The great muni thought for a while and said

“A noble soul is growing in the womb of your friend. The story of his *purvajanma* is sublime and interesting.”

“Kindly tell us that story. We shall be grateful to you.”

“There was a city by name Mandar. In that city, there lived a great man by name Priyananda.”

“Jaya was the name of his wife. Her character accorded with her name. She was absolutely beautiful like an *Apsara*, a divine damsel.”

In course of time Jaya gave birth to a male child who was named Damayant.

This boy grew up to be a young man of noble virtues and extraordinary accomplishments.

One day, Damayant went into the garden for a stroll. There he happened to see a great sadhu who sat absorbed in his scriptural studies.

Damayant was greatly fascinated by his radiant appearance. He saluted the muni and sat there. The muni preached to him the essentials of the *Dharma*. Damayant received the vow called *Samakitavrata* and he also received the other vows.

Damayant became a noble *Shravaka*. He began to give away his wealth in charity. He began to carry out severe spiritual activities and austerities. He began to practise celibacy. After his death, he was born in the second heaven. But who can remain permanently even in heaven. In course of time, he left the heavenly world.

In a city called Mrigankanagar there lived a king by name Harichandra. His queen-consort was Priyangu lakshmi, a woman of extraordinary virtues. He took birth in her womb and he was named Simhachandradeva. Even in this *Janma* he adored and practised the *dharma* that was expounded by Paramatma Jineshwardev and thus he spent his life and again he was born in heaven. After his death there, he was born as Prince Simhavahan in the city of Varun on the Vaithadhya mountain.

At that time in this world the sway of Bhagwan Vimalnath, the thirteenth Tirthankar prevailed.

Once, by chance, Simhavahan met a great and enlightened Muni, by name Lakshmidhar.

Influenced by the spiritual discourses of the Muni, he became a *Shraman* after receiving initiation into the *Sadhu dharma*.

After becoming a *Shraman*, he began to carry out very rigorous spiritual austerities.

After having completed his life in this world, he was again born in the heavenly world.

And now after leaving the heavenly world he is taking birth as your companion's son"

The great Muni said completing his narration.

"But Gurudev, how is his future going to be?" Anjana asked with natural eagerness.

"He will be the treasure-house of all great virtues He will be a spring of tremendous powers He will be the greatest Vidyadhar . . . and he will be a *Charamashariri*. He is going to attain *Moksha* in this life.

Thus, the great Muni mentioned the four great specialities of the *Jiva* that was growing in Anjana's womb, and indicated the boy's future.

"But Oh ! you great ocean of compassion ! How long have we to experience anguish thus ?"

"The sinful *Karmas* which you gathered in your previous *Janma* have almost been exhausted. Your sorrows are going to end soon. The sun of your happiness is going to rise soon. Therefore; you must establish and enshrine in your hearts the *dharma* expounded by the Paramatma Jineshwar; and every day you must adore and worship him. Within a short time, Anjana's uncle will come and take her to his palace. Soon after that, Anjana and Pavananjay will be happily reunited."

Having said this, the great Muniraj who had attained extraordinary spiritual excellence went away travelling through the sky. For a few moments, the two companions kept looking at the sky in great astonishment. They could see the Muniraj travelling far, far away and then fading away.

"Vasanta ! They say that fortunate beings come across a *Kalpavriksha* (The heavenly tree that grants all wishes) even in a desert. This Muniraj is a *Kalpavriksha* for us. We are really fortunate". Anjana said in a mood of delight and elation.

"He is indeed an ocean of boundless grace and compassion. Really, I am amazed and dazed by hearing the story of our

Purvajanma. The *Jivas* that keep wandering in this world through several *Janmas* on account of their ignorance do not understand or realize what sins they have committed. That is why in this world people sometimes are happy and sometimes unhappy.

The *Samsar* is shallow and meaningless. That is why the, enlightened great men exhort us to discard our attachment for the *Samsar*. As long as the *Jiva* is ensnared in infatuation, he will continue to commit sinful actions. He will go on gathering sins and when he commits sinful actions he will have to face calamities, when those sins produce their effect. Anjana did not take much time to understand the real nature of *Samsar*.

The two ladies were absorbed deeply in thinking about the great Muni and in contemplating on the supreme advantages of renunciation. Then, suddenly they heard the ferocious roar of a lion and naturally and instinctively, the two shuddered with mortal dread. When they looked towards the entrance to the valley they saw there a ferocious lion standing.

The lion was shaking its tail in such a ferocious manner that it might crack the earth into pieces. The sight was really terrible. Its mouth was stained with fresh blood. Its astounding roar seemed to be echoing in the horizons. Its deadly claws struck terror in the hearts of the beholders. The two ladies were greatly terrified; and closed their eyes; and began reciting *Shri Namaskar Mahamantra*.

Just then, a miracle occurred.

Suddenly, there appeared an octopus of massive dimensions in the valley; pounced upon the lion; and tore it into pieces. The lion lay dead in a few moments.

Then, the octopus came; and stood quietly near Anjana. She was reciting the *Shri Namaskar Mahamantra*, with her eyes closed. The octopus came closer to Anjana; and stood there for a few moments. There, a tremendous transformation took place in its form. Within the twinkling of an eye in the place where

the octopus was standing, there stood a divine being whose form and face looked radiant. Beside him, there appeared a goddess.

They woke up Anjana from her meditation. They folded their hands and saluted her. Anjana saluted them humbly folding her hands over her bent forehead. She said :

“Who are you ? What may be the purpose of your visit ?”

“Noble lady ! My name is Manichul, I am a *Gandharva* (a demigod) and I am the lord of this valley.” He said introducing himself to her.

“Seeing that a noble woman who had come to my valley was in peril, I assumed the shape of an octopus and killed the lion,” said Manichul explaining the purpose of his visit to her.

“Now, you can be free from all worries and fears. You can stay here; and I will take care of you.”

Who would not come to the rescue of a noble woman who would risk even her life to safeguard her chastity. Even the greatest gods salute such a woman; and there is no wonder in this. Manichul possessed *AVADHIJNAN* extrasensory perception. He had the highest veneration for Anjana’s chastity and purity; and so he permitted her to stay in his valley. Moreover, in order to relieve her of her anguish, he made a plan.

Manichul was a *Gandharva* himself. Therefore, he was a supreme master of music in the whole universe; and he was famous throughout the universe for his excellence as a musician. In order to entertain Anjana, he and his wife began to sing in a sweet and melodious manner.

First of all, they began singing songs of glorification in honour of Lord Jineshwar. What an excellent performance it was ! Their rendering of the songs was absolutely free from the defects of rhythm, or melody or in the accompanying instrumental music.

Within a short time, the atmosphere of fear and agitation changed into one of joy. A new consciousness began to flash

through nature. Trees and plants put forth tender, green leaves; and began to smile joyously. The withering branches and twigs began to put forth tender leaves and colourful flowers. Flocks of jubilant birds began to fly over the valley. Gentle winds began to whisper in the surrounding areas. In the nests, birds began singing sweetly. The wild beasts of the forest thronged the valley mesmerically attracted by the songs. Even the stones in the valley seemed to have been moved by the songs sung by them.

Anjana began to sway with joy. She was deeply moved and spell-bound by the songs sung in glorification of the Lord. The shadow of her anguish disappeared. Anjana felt that she was floating on the waves of delight and elation.

Manichul felt greatly happy to have delighted the noble woman by his songs. After having completed singing, he sought her leave to go; and having obtained her leave, he went away.

After Manichul went away, Anjana looked towards Vasanta. Vasanta Tilaka was watching the entrance of the valley, with fixed eyes. She seemed to have been absorbed in thinking deeply about something.

“What are you thinking of so deeply ?” said Anjana placing her hand affectionately on Vasanta Tilaka’s shoulder.

“Nothing particular.”

“But I am unable to understand what has been happening.”

“What are you referring to ?”

“Only what I have said ?”

“What is it ?”

“I am thinking of this point. When great gods and goddesses have realized your purity and chastity and are willing to risk anything to come to your rescue at every step why is it that your relatives and the members of your family have been

staining your character and despising you instead of realizing and respecting your purity and chastity ?”

“All this is the sport of my *Karmas*, you mad creature !”

“Very well, but it is difficult to understand why sometimes you get the cool shadow of felicity and why sometimes you are exposed to the hot and scorching rays of anguish. This is what I cannot understand”.

“Vasanta ! There is nothing incomprehensible in this. Sometimes we do noble deeds and sometimes we commit sins. Do we not ? Even there, the duration of good deeds is short while that of sinful deeds is long. The meaning of this is that in human life the duration of happiness is brief and that of sorrow is long. Dear friend ! There is another point which you have forgotten totally. Only a little while ago the enlightened Gurudev revealed to us the events of our past *Janma*. He suggested only this truth by narrating that story. Is this not enough to convince you of it ?” Anjana said this to clear the doubt in the mind of Vasanta Tilaka. Even this explanation did not satisfy her and she thought it good to be silent. After thinking for a while she again said :

“If we have to live here it is better we seek shelter in a cave.” But even before this Manichul had made the place neat and tidy.

“Everything is all right but only one thing is lacking.”

“What is it, dear friend ?”

“We do not have here an image of the Paramatma to worship him.”

“That is true; but where can we get an image of the Paramatma ?”

“If you find some clay I can make an image out of it.”

“Let me try . . .” saying this Vasanta Tilaka went out of the valley. She reached the banks of the lake. When she walked

about here and there she found some viscous clay. She took it up with devotion. Anjana was an expert in sculpture and in the allied arts. So, she made a beautiful and symmetrical image of the Lord. Then reciting *Shri Namaskar Mahamantra* she enshrined the image in a proper place.

Every day Vasanta Tilaka used to bring from the lake some lotus flowers with which they worshipped the image of the Paramatma with overflowing devotion.

The wheel of time went on revolving. The child in the womb of Anjana grew and at an auspicious time she gave birth to a male child. Vasanta Tilaka with due care attended on Anjana at that time. Anjana took the child into her lap and began to weep. Her heart was full. Looking at the beautiful and radiant face of her son she wept bitterly.

“My dear child ! How can I celebrate your birth in this forest area ? How can I organize celebrations and jubilations with music and songs ? I am an unfortunate woman.” Vasanta Tilaka bowed her head in sorrow. The tears began to trickle from her eyes. She thought : “If this child was born in the palace sweets would have been distributed throughout the kingdom. Everywhere in the kingdom auspicious songs would have been sung to celebrate his birth. Musical concerts and the singing of devotional hymns would have been organized. Yes the whole kingdom would have swayed in the swing of joy and jubilation and Anjana’s joy would have been boundless but she is in adversity. The soul whose future is resplendent and great and who is to attain salvation in this life had to be born in this desolate forest area.”

Anjana sat at the door of the cave with her child in her lap. Even now she had not stopped weeping. Her mind and heart had become black and her eyes had become swollen with continuous weeping. Hearing her cries of anguish even the birds and animals of the forest gathered there and began to look on as if in deep sorrow. It was as if they were overwhelmed with sorrow at the sight of Anjana’s anguish.

Just then, a divine airship was flying through the sky. The Vidyadhar who sat in the airship happened to see this valley. He saw a woman sitting at the entrance of a cave, with a child, weeping. At once, he ordered his airship to be brought to ground. In a few moments, the airship landed in the midst of the forest. The Vidyadhar came hurriedly towards the cave.

“Sister, who are you ?” Why are you weeping ?” he asked Anjana in a tender voice. Hearing the voice of a stranger Vasanta Tilaka who was doing some work in the cave came out and stood near Anjana. Anjana did not have the strength to give any reply to the question of the Vidyadhar. So Vasanta Tilaka tried to answer his questions. She too was sobbing. She requested the Vidyadhar to be seated there on leaves and flowers and then she narrated in full the story of Anjana.

The Vidyadhar kept shedding tears as he heard the story, just as rain falls from clouds during the rainy season. His bright and radiant face became gloomy and depressed. He began to weep and when Vasanta Tilaka had completed her narration he wept bitterly.

“Oh king ! instead of weeping thus cannot you find some way of mitigating her sorrow ?” said another Vidyadhar who was a master of the science of omens, placing his hand on his shoulder.

There was silence everywhere. There was no noise anywhere except their hot sighs and sobs. There was stillness everywhere.

After sometime, the Vidyadhar said with grief in his heart, “Dear child, I am the Vidyadhar king of Hanupurnagar. My mother is Sundarimala and my father is Chitrabanu, Anjana’s mother, Hridayasundari is my sister. My name is Manasveg.”

On hearing these words of Manasveg both the ladies were greatly amazed and delighted. Looking towards Anjana, he said again, “Dear child, seeing you alive I feel greatly happy and relieved. Today, a great burden which was weighing on my

heart has been removed." When Anjana found that Manasveg, the Vidyadhar king was none other than her maternal uncle she began to weep more bitterly. Her throat became hoarse with weeping. Her voice was choked and she remembered all the past calamities. This seems to be a psychological truth about human beings that when they see their relatives they remember their past unhappiness.

Manasveg tried to comfort her and said in a serious voice, "Dear child, do not weep. The days of your sorrow are now over." When the armour of *Karmas* breaks and falls down in pieces, things which one never dreamt of occur as if miraculously. Anjana never knew that in that desolate forest her uncle would meet her. She never knew her stay in the forest would end so soon.

Manasveg asked the Vidyadhar who was a master of the *Shastra* relating to predictions. "Oh you enlightened one! kindly tell us about the future of this child."

"Your Highness? I was delighted when I saw this child. From the time of our coming here, I have been thinking of this child's future. In fact, I have also cast his horoscope already."

The child was born on the eighth day (*Ashtami*), in the bleak fortnight of the *Chitra*. His *Nakshatra* (constellation) is *Shravana*. The sun-god himself was the lord of that day. The sun-god dwells in an elevated house in the constellation of Aries. The moon was in the constellation of capricorn. Mars dwells in the constellation of *Vrishaba* (Taurus). Shashiputra was residing in the constellation of Pisces and Brihaspati was residing in the constellation of cancer. Saturn and Jupiter (the preceptor of the demons) resided in the constellation of pisces. Oh king! The child is born in the *Meena lagna* and he has *Brahma-yoga*. The result of all this is that all the stars and planets are perfectly favourable to the boy and they bestow upon him great prosperity."

"All this is very ordinary, dear priest! Please tell us if there is any special virtue or indication."

"Oh king, as soon as this boy enters the phase of youth he will become a king. But of course he will not have any attachment for royal power or splendour. This is his final *Janma*. After this he will attain the status of a *Siddha*." The astrologer predicted the future of the child.

After having understood the astrologer's predictions Anjana was extremely happy. She looked at her child who was playing on her lap and experienced new sensations and feelings.

"Dear sister Anjana ! Please take the child and get into the airship." Manasveg said standing up. Before leaving the place, he looked into the cave and noticed in a lonely corner of the cave the image of Lord Jineshwardev. He was astounded by its beauty and asked Vasanta Tilaka, "How did you secure such a beautiful image here ?"

"This image is the creation of Anjana. We have been worshipping this image three times regularly, every day," Vasanta said. "Dear uncle ! It is only on account of the inconceivable grace of the Paramatma that you came here by chance and saw me and our stay in the forest has come to an end. Indeed, no one can really estimate and measure the boundless grace of the Paramatma."

Manasveg was deeply impressed by Anjana's incomparable devotion for the Paramatma.

"Dear child Anjana ! Take this image with you. It is so extraordinarily beautiful that it will captivate anyone's heart," Manasveg said overwhelmed with devotion.

Vasanta Tilaka carried the image in both her hands and placed it in the divine airship. After that Anjana entered the airship with her child in her arms, Vasanta Tilaka also got into the airship. Manasveg held an ornamental play-thing decked with gems near Anjana. The anklets of the child produced sweet noises. The child looked at the ornamental cloth with fixed eyes. He tried to lift his hand and to pull it.

The airship rose into the sky and began flyinig towards Hanupuranagar. Anjana kept watching the beautiful sights on the earth forgetting herself whereas her son in his endeavour to catch the ornamental toy was leaping in her lap.

Then suddenly he leaped up. He was making repeated attempts to catch the decorated toy while the airship was going forwards. Anjana's son suddenly fell down to the ground.

It happened so quickly that neither Anjana nor Vasanta Tilaka noticed it at once. But at the very next moment Anjana screamed with horror and all were stupefied. Her son was not to be seen anywhere. Her son was weeping aloud.

"Uncle dear uncle ! My son has fallen down," Anjana said screaming and shrieking. Manasveg stopped the airship. He told Anjana to have patience and then he descended from the airship. A miracle had occurred in the place where the boy had fallen.

The boy had fallen upon a mountain. But nothing had happened to him. He was not even hurt but he was leaping about there smiling. Just as the mightiest mountains break to pieces when they are hit by the *Vajra* (the thunder bolt of Indra) the mountain had broken to pieces when the child fell upon it. Manasveg kept looking on with astonishment and shock. He was amazed and stupefied by the extraordinary strength and heroism of Anjana's son. He took him into his lap.

When Manasveg brought the child into the airship Anjana, at once hurried forward and embraced the child. She swayed with delight.

"I hope my son is not hurt," she said panting for breath.

"My dear Anjana, nothing has happened to your child but he has hurt someone," and Manasveg narrated the story of the boy's extraordinary strength and heroism. Anjana was thrilled to hear the story of her son's miraculous feat.

Soon, the airship reached Hanupurnagar. The members of the royal family and the others received Anjana and her child with overflowing affection. They were all greatly happy to see Anjana and her child. All gathered there and kept looking on Anjana and Vasanta Tilaka. Manasveg introduced them to all. All felt greatly happy to hear it.

Manasveg sent for the Chief Minister and instructed him to organize a magnificent celebration to celebrate the child's birth.

Anjana was treated with extraordinary affection and honour in the palace. Throughout the day and night the queen, the maids and the attendants in the palace were always by her side looking to her needs and comforts. Anjana's son was being brought up with affection and love. Anjana and Vasanta Tilaka earned the love and affection of all by their soft voice and gentle behaviour. She was loved and respected by all the people of Hanupurnagar.

Preparations were made for the celebration of the boy's birth. The city was splendidly decorated with festoons of green leaves and garlands of fresh and fragrant flowers. Flags were hoisted on all the mansions; and arches were put up in all the circles and turnings. Sweets were distributed to all. Gifts of money and clothes were given to the poor and the destitute. Prisoners were released from prisons. Worship was offered to God in all the temples. At all places musical concerts were arranged and the whole atmosphere began to reverberate with sweet melodies. The birth of Anjana's son was thus celebrated with royal grandeur and *eclat*.

At the time of the naming ceremony Manasveg asked Anjana, "Dear Anjana, what name shall we give the child."

"I am sure you have thought of a name."

"Yes..Yes. I have already thought of a name," Vasanta said speaking in the middle.

"What name have you thought of? Let us know?" Manasveg asked Vasanta Tilaka.

Vasanta Tilaka looked towards Anjana and said, "Shall I tell you what I have thought of?"

"Surely! You can mention it without any hesitation."

"Nayananand!"

"Ah! What a beautiful name?" said Manasveg.

"Is it not a nice name?" Vasanta said, feeling a little abashed.

"No, No! It is not, I was thinking of something else," Manasveg said.

"Then you tell us what name we shall give him," Anjana said looking towards Manasveg.

"Dear Anjana, this boy is a *Charamashariri*. Sooner or later he is going to renounce the *Samsar* and become a *sadhu*. We should give him such a name that he will not forget our city throughout his life."

"Yes uncle! What you say is true."

"But we should not disappoint Vasanta. We have to think of this also." Manasveg said smiling and looking towards Vasanta.

"Uncle! I do not oppose your suggestion. The name that you suggest will please me." Vasanta said with a smiling face.

"The name of our city is Hanupurnagar. Therefore, it will be fine if we name him Hanuman. What do you think?"

"Excellent.... really excellent!" both the ladies said in one voice.

A grand celebration was arranged to name the boy and the boy was named Hanuman. Everyone who heard the name was delighted but the priest speaking in the middle said, "Your Highness! of course the name is excellent and it will make him

remember our city. Our city will become immortal in a way but we should give him another name so that we may not forget him."

"All right, suggest another name to Hanuman which will please you and which will enable Hanupurnagar to remember him for ever," Manasveg said.

"His other name shall be Srishaila," said the priest.

Accordingly throughout the city it was proclaimed with drum-beats that Anjana's son was named Hanuman and Srishaila.

Anjana could not forget Pavananjay. She always thought of him with grief. She was always gloomy and depressed thinking of him. Sometimes she also shed tears in solitude. Whenever she saw her son she remembered Pavananjay, at once. She tried to forget him but she could not; and her grief increased all the more.

XXV

PAVANANJAY'S RETURN

"Anjana! Please, would you tell me one thing."

"What is it?"

"After coming to uncle's house, was have been quite happy in every respect. We have been enjoying all comforts. All have been greatly honouring us; and have been showering their affection upon us. If we ask for one comfort they extend a hundred comforts to us. Yet.... In spite of all this...."

"We do not lack anything here. All are always eager to give us whatever we desire. Yet you have not been cheerful. Sometimes you laugh no doubt; always you try to look cheerful but in spite of it your eyes reveal that you are deeply agitated.... It is evident that you have been experiencing some deep agitation."

Vasanta Tilaka finding a suitable opportunity, one day, asked Anjana why she was always sad and depressed. Of course, after having come to the house of her uncle much of her sorrow had abated. She mingled with her uncle's daughter and others in the family like sugar mingling with milk. She had become the apple of everyone's eyes. All treated her with the greatest affection. More than everything else, the lovely child, Hanuman also enabled her to forget her sorrow. Yet whenever she was alone; whenever she was in solitude, she used to become immersed in deep anguish. Sometimes, she also shed tears. Vasanta Tilaka had observed all this; and was worried about it.

Her mind also was filled with grief. Of course, Anjana used to conceal her sorrow from others very carefully but how could she conceal her grief from Vasanta Tilaka who was always with her, day and night, like her shadow. So, one day, when Anjana was alone Vasanta Tilaka asked her that question,

“Vasanta ! Why should I be sad here ? What cause is there for any agitation here ?”

“You know it best.”

“Shall I mention a point ?”

“Why should you hesitate to speak the truth to me ?”

“I am not hesitating to say it. That is not the reason but why should I cause grief to you also by speaking of a past unhappy event. I do not think it is proper to speak of it to you, I do not like to mention it. That is the reason for my not speaking of it. What matter can there be which I should conceal from my dearest friend ?”

“Look here friend ! I have been with you through thick and thin, sharing your joys and sorrows. If you are sad how can I be cheerful ?”

“Vasanta ! Here, we have peace and happiness. But I am worried because my mother-in-law has stained my honour by making a false accusation against me. Until it is disproved and until my innocence is established how can I be happy and peaceful ?”

“But what is the use of weeping over it thus, day and night ? Have you forgotten the words of the enlightened muni. The days of our sorrow have ended; and the sun of our happiness has risen. If Pavananjay comes back the stain upon your character will be removed naturally.”

“What you say is true. Pavananjay may return.”

“Then, Ketumati will be in hot water. Here, there may be delay but not the darkness of disappointment. Do you understand ?” said Vasanta forecasting the future.

"But....?"

"But what....?"

"What will be his condition?"

"He will have to face unhappy circumstances. He probably is searching for us." Anjana's eyes looked far into the horizons. The sun had disappeared behind the western mountains.

After having given his signet-ring to Anjana and after having taken leave of her, Pavananjay, accompanied by Prahasit, returned to the banks of the *Manas Sarovar*. Just then, the sun was rising in the east, sending out his silvery radiance. In the golden splendour of the morning sun the whole area had become resplendent. Birds were twittering in the trees, flying from branch to branch. The water in the lake was calm and cool. The cool morning breeze was wafting a message of some new life. The radiant rays of the sun fell on everything and made it golden in colour as if by some heavenly alchemy. The sun-god had sat in his chariot drawn by seven horses and had set off on his journey around the earth. Orders were given to the army to move. With his vast army, Pavananjay travelled through the sky and reached Lanka. After having given orders to his men to pitch tents there for his camp, Pavananjay went straight to the court of the King of Lanka. Prahasit was also with him. Dashmukh Ravan was seated on his magnificent throne studded with precious gems of rare and serene lustre. Pavananjay stopped a little. Ravan came forward a few paces and embraced Pavananjay. Ravan was supremely happy to see that Pavananjay had come with his army.

"Pavananjay ! I am supremely happy to see you. Now, the task is such that only youngsters can carry it out. You know that in Pathal Lanka Varuna is going beyond his limits causing dread to all. He has captured our ablest commanders Khar and Dushana and has imprisoned them."

"Oh king ! I heard about Varuna's enormities from the messenger sent by you."

"Then we have to make speedy preparations to set off on our campaign. This time, I will personally accompany you all. Now, the time has come to teach a bitter lesson to Varuna and his haughty sons. Until we fight and destroy all the defences of Varunapuri they will not recover their senses. Ravan accompanied Pavananjay to Varunapuri. He was accompanied by his vast army and a number of subordinate kings.

Hearing the determination of Ravan to plunge into the fight Pavananjay was greatly grieved. He thought, "This will cause a tremendous destruction of humanity. Rivers of blood will flow. Kingdom after kingdom will be destroyed. Therefore, somehow Ravan should be prevented from entering the war. But this is possible only if we can prevail upon Varuna to surrender himself to Ravan but who can persuade Varuna and his sons who captured and imprisoned the heroic commanders Khar and Dushana to see reason."

Yet, he felt that some way to achieve this objective must be found out. So, Pavananjay decided to use diplomatic measures to achieve this objective. He thought it was absolutely necessary to use diplomatic measures for this purpose. The compromise should be such that Ravan should not be displeased and Varuna should not be disgraced. After thinking deeply about this, he found out such a way.

Ravan had already planned extraordinary battle-formations. He appointed Pavananjay, the commander of the combined armies and explained to him the battle-formations for the first-day.

"Indeed, your battle-formations are extraordinary!" Pavananjay praised Ravan's battle-formations greatly.

"But the success of the battle-formation depends upon the skill and ability of the commander."

"You will know it tomorrow."

"Very good Pavananjay ! I have this confidence in you. I am sure that you will attain a splendid victory."

"But dear sir, another idea has occurred to me."

"Let us know what it is."

"If we can achieve our objectives without violence and killing of people..."

"Tell me clearly what you have to say. I am unable to understand what you are suggesting."

"If we can achieve our objective by making a fool of Varuna...."

"But how....?"..

"First, we shall release Khar and Dushana and then we shall think of the next step."

"But Varuna is not such a fool as to allow us to release Khar and Dushana so easily."

"You please leave this matter to me. I will manage it."

"Do you suggest that we should go and beg him to release them? Never. That we shall never do under any circumstances. Kindly rest assured that such a situation will never arise nor will we bow our heads to him, and we shall see that he shall hand over Khar and Dushana to us."

"But how is that possible?"

"Please permit me to make my endeavours this night to achieve that objective."

"All right! Agreed."

Ravan thought it was only a brain-wave of Pavananjay; a mere idea, but Ravan's permission made Pavananjay feel that his plan would succeed. Ravan's permission was the key to the success of his plan. He saluted Ravan; took leave of him and went back to his tent. In the tent, Prahasit was walking up and down. Pavananjay said to Prahasit.

"You must at once go into the city."

"Yes. I am ready."

"Without stopping anywhere you must straight go to Varuna and convey my message to him."

"But what is the message?"

"You must inform Varuna that a friend namely Pavananjay the son of King Prahlad desires an urgent meeting with him and you must return, at once, and tell me his reaction."

Prahasit, at once, got ready to go. He put on the dress of a messenger and went travelling through the sky and entered Varunapuri, the capital of Varuna. Everywhere in the city preparations were going on for the war. Every soldier was being drilled and trained. The courtyard in front of the palace was teeming with heroic warriors. Armed guards were watching the main gates of the palace. From the balcony of the palace, the princes, Pundarik and Rajiv were instilling hope and confidence into the soldiers with their spirited voices. Every word uttered by them inspired sparks of confidence and courage in the soldiers.

"My dear comrades! Look! We fear that our country's freedom and sovereignty are in danger now. Ravan, the King of Lanka has come like a dark cloud to eclipse our country's freedom and glory. He has come to invade and capture our country. The Rakshasa soldiers are clattering and rustling at the gates of our city with the purpose of destroying us. This is an open challenge to our valour and heroism but there is no need to worry about this because justice is on our side. Ravan because of his ambition to extend his territory and to increase his power has invaded our motherland. Therefore, we should make Ravan taste the bitter fruits at our hands which his commanders tasted sometime ago and we are confident that we shall make him taste the bitter fruit of defeat and disgrace. We shall show our courage and heroism in fighting against Ravan so that

every son of our country may be ready to sacrifice his life for its freedom. If anyone were to impede our efforts we shall destroy him. We shall bring all his bravado to nought so that he shall not make such an attempt again.

“Victory to King Varuna. Long live our liberty.” These loud cries reverberated in the sky. On account of the commotion of the vast army of Varuna every inch of the earth began to shake and shudder. Prahasit stood stupefied for a few moments by the sight of the extraordinary valour and heroism of the soldiers. He went to the door-keeper and said, “I am a messenger from Pavananjay, the son of Prahlad, the king of Adityapur. I want to meet king Varuna urgently.”

The door-keeper observed Prahasit carefully for sometime and then he was convinced that he was a messenger. Then he called a soldier moving a little away from the door and gave him some suggestion by means of a sign.

The soldier led him through a secret passage to the chamber of King Varuna.

“Victory to the king!” a soldier cried bowing to the king.

“Jayamangal! What is the news?”

“Oh Lord! The messenger sent by Pavananjay, the son of king Prahlad of Adityapur and the commander of Ravan, the king of Lanka desires to meet you?” Jayamangal said in a humble tone looking towards King Varuna. Varuna thought for a while about the matter and then in a serious tone he said:

“Bring him here.”

The soldier brought Prahasit into the chamber and then returned. Prahasit saluted king Varuna respectfully,

“Yes sir, what may be the purpose of your visit to us?”

“Oh King you know that Ravan, the King of Lanka has made Pavananjay, the commander of his armies.”

"Yes. We have heard about it."

"I am his dearest friend and my name is Prahasit. The Commander Pavananjay has sent a message to you."

"Is it any special message?"

"Oh King, Pavananjay desires to meet you, at once."

Hearing the message brought by the messenger King Varuna was startled. He thought about the situation a little. "The supreme commander of Ravan's armies has come to meet the enemy-king on the eve of the battle. There is something fishy in this. I smell a rat. I hope this is not any ruse of Ravan!" He sent for his sons, Pundarik and Rajiv. After having discussed with them the matter for a long time, he said to Prahasit:

"We heartily welcome the commander, Pavananjay."

Prahasit at once returned to his camp. He conveyed to Pavananjay, King Varuna's message. Pavananjay was overwhelmed with joyful emotions.

At once taking Prahasit with him Pavananjay went into the city of Varunapuri. King Varuna was discussing with Pundarik and Rajiv some matters relating to the war and was expecting the arrival of Pavananjay. Just then the door-keeper came in, saluted him and informed him of the arrival of Pavananjay. Pundarik and Rajiv went out of the chamber to receive Pavananjay. They extended a hearty welcome to Pavananjay. Both the brothers were greatly fascinated by the handsome appearance of Pavananjay. Pundarik and Rajiv took Pavananjay into the chamber of discussions. King Varuna received Pavananjay with a smiling face. Pavananjay folded his hands and saluted King Varuna. As desired by them he sat on a dignified seat near the king.

For a few moments, there was silence in the chamber.

"Dear commander! You have taken the trouble of coming here on the eve of war. Surely you have some serious purpose in coming here!" King Varuna smiled and began a conversation with him.

"Dear king! I have come here to prevent the death of countless innocent persons in the war. I have come here to prevent unnecessary violence and bloodshed. This is the only purpose with which I have come to you," said Pavananjay, smiling amiably.

"In that case, there was no need for your coming here with a vast army. If you had not come with your armies this question of violence and bloodshed or the killing of innocent people as you call it would not have arisen."

"O king! You know very well that Ravan, the King of Lanka is not the kind of man who would have peace of mind until he has taken a severe revenge against his enemies. This is the speciality of his nature. You know this truth very well. You have unnecessarily provoked Ravan, the King of Lanka by capturing and imprisoning his commanders, Khar and Dushana."

"His anger might have been provoked and it may be flaming but we are ready to extinguish those flames in the battlefield."

"Then do you hope to defeat Ravan, the mighty king of Lanka and to achieve victory over him. That may be your idea but so far as I can think of it it is but your fanciful imagination. You can never dream of defeating Ravan. Let alone defeating Ravan, you cannot even defeat in a straight fight a single relative of his and if you attempt it, there will only ensue, a terrible massacre of innocent people and boundless harm to you.

Even to defeat one Vidyadhar king out of countless kings that are helping him there will have to be a terrible bloodshed and you will be risking your lives. When that is so defeating the King of Lanka is something which you cannot even dream of achieving."

"Dear commander! We hope that you do not imagine that we are cowards wearing bangles on our hands like women." Pundarik was greatly excited by anger.

"No ! We do not think so. We know very well that you are men of valour and heroism. We know that you are men of real ability and prowess. But the question is whether Mother Nature has given birth to such mighty heroes as you to sacrifice innocent lives to the flames of war. How far is it proper for great heroes like you to kill human beings. It is only on account of this reason that I have come to meet you. My desire is to prevent wars which keep hovering over this world, by adopting proper methods."

"But the proper method now is that the King of Lanka must return to his capital . . ." Pundarik said impelled by his feeling of animosity.

"Dear prince ! That is really a proper way but it is not possible."

"Then have you come here to ask us to surrender ourselves to Ravan ?"

"No, definitely not. Under any circumstances you should not surrender yourselves to him. That is not at all my idea. I cannot even dream of mighty heroes like you making a surrender to the enemy."

"Then ?"

"Can't you become friends again ?" said Pavananjay preparing carefully the grounds for a compromise.

"But the King of Lanka is not prepared for a compromise. When that is so, how can we think of a compromise ?"

"Yes, it is possible. I am prepared to try for a compromise on your behalf."

"Then, you must have come here with the knowledge and consent of Ravan," King Varuna said speaking in the middle to probe the mind of Pavananjay.

"Dear king ! Do not even dream of such a thing. If Ravan, the King of Lanka could suffer such an indignity or could adopt

such a method overawed by his enemies he could have sent a messenger from Lanka to you. He would not have come here with such a vast army intent upon making a war against you. I have been shuddering at the tremendous violence and bloodshed that will take place. So I have thought of a via-media policy to prevent the war and it is my own idea. It is only with this hope that I have come to you without Ravan's permission at such a late hour of the night as this."

"Dear commander! We too agree with you on this point. I too do not like violence and war but one has to resort to violence though against one's own will sometimes in order to safeguard the freedom of one's country," King Varuna said explaining his political policy.

"But I do not want to limit or take away your freedom. On the contrary, my plan is that your freedom should remain unaffected and that a permanent friendship should be established between you and the King of Lanka."

"You yourself suggest a way."

"You must hand over Khar and Dushana to us. You must meet and receive the King of Lanka as a friend and you must remain a friendly country."

"King Varun glanced at his sons Pundarik and Rajiv. Both the brothers seemed to have been thinking deeply about the proposal made by Pavananjay. His proposal did not contain any condition that would cause dishonour or disgrace to them. Moreover, if that proposal was acted upon they could avoid the death of countless number of people, violence and bloodshed; and could save themselves from harm. They did not have any doubt or suspicion regarding Pavananjay's desire for peace. They found that he was frank, and truthful and that he was their well-wisher.

"You need not be obstinate; you need not have any doubts or suspicions. This is not any diplomatic or political ruse. On the contrary, this is a sure method of preventing violence and

blood-shed and the death of countless innocent people," Pavananjay said this explaining his proposal clearly after noticing that King Varuna was deeply thinking about it.

Finally, Pundarik and Rajiv gave their consent to the proposal. King Varuna also gave his consent happily.

"Oh King ! I am extremely happy that you have understood my real intention and purpose. Really, your intellectual incisiveness is admirable."

"But dear commander, we want to make one point clear to you," Rajiv said perturbed.

"What is it ?"

"We will not come to the camp of the King of Lanka to meet him."

"Dear prince ! You need not go to the camp of King of Lanka. The King of Lanka also need not come to meet you here. But both the parties can meet as friends in the garden which is situated to the east of the city."

"That will be all right," Rajiv said giving his consent to it.

"Then I take my leave of you. I have to meet the King of Lanka. I have to prevail upon him also to agree to this compromise. After that, we will send you a message by Prahasit."

After taking leave of King Varuna, Pavananjay travelled through the sky and reached his camp. It was past midnight. Deep silence prevailed all over the Rakshasa camp. But Ravan, the King of Lanka was still giving some instructions and suggestions to his friends and warriors. He had not been able, to sleep. He was thinking of making proper battle-formations and supervising the battle-field carefully, so that his army might not have to face a defeat again.

Pavananjay came to Ravan's tent. He made a sign and suggested to the guard at the door to move away from there and

entered the tent. Ravan was carrying on a discussion with Vibhishan. Pavananjay saluted Ravan.

"What is the reason for your coming here at this time of the night ?" saying this Ravan asked him to be seated near him.

"Victory to the king. Our objective has been achieved."

"How ?"

"We are going to get back our commanders Khar and Dushana."

"Pavananjay. This cannot be true. A proud man like Varuna would not voluntarily send them back to us. I can't believe it. This is absolutely impossible."

"Your Highness ! This is indeed a miracle and you have to believe it. It is a fact. Tomorrow morning we have to go to the garden on the eastern side of the city. There, King Varuna will surrender Khar and Dushana to us, and he will be one of your heroic allies. King Varuna is going to be your friend. There is no doubt about it."

Ravan had a genuine affection for Pavananjay. So he could not reject his proposal. Ravan did not oppose Pavananjay's proposal to treat King Varuna as a friend and an ally. Vibhishan also liked Pavananjay's proposal.

"Vibhishan, please bring Kumbhakarna here at once. As soon as Ravan gave this order to him, Vibhishan went out and brought Kumbhakarna. Pavananjay explained his proposal to him also. He too gave his consent to it.

Thus, securing Ravan's orders for the cessation of war Pavananjay returned to his tent. He gave some instructions to Prahasit and sent him to King Varuna and then hoisted upon his tent the flag of peace.

All were greatly amazed to see the flags of peace on the tents of both the hostile groups. Those who did not know the secret of the situation were stunned. As soon as it was dawn, Ravan

the King of Lanka went to the garden on the eastern side of the city, taking with him Kumbhakarna, Vibhishan and Pavananjay. In the same manner, Prahasit brought King Varuna, his two sons and Ravan's commanders, Khar and Dushana to the garden. King Varun and King Ravan embraced each other in an amiable manner. King Varuna handed over Khar and Dushana to Ravan. Thus the two kings became close friends and allies.

Ravan, the King of Lanka was greatly impressed by Pavananjay's intellectual incisiveness, ability and diplomatic wisdom. He insisted that Pavananjay should accompany him to Lanka. But Pavananjay politely declined the invitation. He wanted to return to Adityapur as early as possible. He obtained Ravan's leave to return to Adityapur. King Ravan honoured Pavananjay greatly by giving him precious presentations and then gave him a hearty send-off.

Pavananjay travelling through the sky proceeded in the direction of Adityapur. On the way, when he halted for some time on the banks of the lake *Manas Sarovar*, naturally he remembered Anjana. The events of the past appeared before his mental eyes in the form of pictures. He was filled with grief and said to Prahasit :

"I wonder what calamities Anjana has been experiencing."

"Dear prince ! I too wonder how and why this fear has arisen in your mind."

"Prahasit, I do not have any doubts or fears but I am eager to know how Anjana is."

"Are we far away from our city ?"

"We are very near the city. We can enter the city."

Within the twinkling of an eye, the airship began to hover over the city of Adityapur. The news of Pavananjay's return spread in the city like wildfire. King Prahlad made arrangements to receive Pavananjay in accordance with royal dignity and status.

The citizens of the city received Pavananjay with great honour. They gave him an enthusiastic welcome. But his mind was not in the reception given to him. It was wandering away towards Anjana. He, out of courtesy, and as a matter of formality accepted the honour given to him by the people but his heart was with Anjana. Like a bird his heart wanted to rest in the nest of Anjana's loving heart. Instructing Prahast regarding the things to be attended to, he went straight to the palace. He met his mother and father, his dear relatives and then he went to the palace of Anjana. But there was no one in that palace. It looked desolate and deserted. The palace which was once full of buzzle and activity was now desolate. There was stillness everywhere. There were no guards or door-keepers or attendants. Seeing that terrible sight his heart sank into despair.

"Is there anyone inside?" he said shocked by the stillness in the palace.

Someone said from within the palace: "Who is it?" Pavananjay went in the direction of the chamber from which he heard the voice. There he saw an old attendant who was like a skeleton.

"Where is Anjana?" he asked impatiently.

For a few moments the old woman kept staring at Pavananjay and then said....

"Who are you?"

"Oh! Don't you recognize me? I am Pavananjay...but where is Anjana. She is not to be seen anywhere," he said with increasing agitation.

The tears trickled from the old woman's eyes. Her voice became choked, her face wrinkled in anguish.

"Why don't you answer my question? Why are you silent like a stone? Where is my dearest Anjana?" Pavananjay became agitated. His heart began to palpitate with fears and doubts.

“What shall I say dear prince ?”

“Tell me at once what the matter is. Where is Anjana ? What happened to her ?”

“Dear prince, your mother made false accusations against Anjana and expelled her from the palace,” said the old woman with a voice full of grief.

“What did you say ?” Pavananjay’s eyes widened with shock and stupefaction. His lips began to quiver.

“Dear sir, in your absence, Anjanadevi became pregnant. Your mother accused her of infidelity to you and sent her away from the palace. Our guards escorted her to Mahendranagar; left her near the city; and came back.”

A dark dense cloud covered Pavananjay’s eyes. His body shook with grief and anguish greatly stupefied by what he learnt. He collapsed into a seat.

XXVI

IN SEARCH OF ANJANA

Pavananjay's dream-world crumbled to pieces. Seeing the frustration in which his love for Anjana had ended, he began to shed tears..... He became broken-hearted and began to walk to and fro in the desolate forest. A tremendous storm began to rage in his heart. The tears began to flow like rivers from his eyes. A cyclone of reminiscences tore through his mind. His mind and heart became bleak and blighted. He could not restrain the waves of anguish that rose in his heart. That unexpected meeting.... that sweet and happy union for a few moments... had resulted in this bitter separation between them. The two souls that had been swinging in each other's love were now experiencing the anguish of separation and desperation. Human life is distorted by the co-existence of the contradictory elements of joy and sorrow, smiles and tears. Enthusiasm and despair.... Prosperity and poverty.... rise and fall.... on account of the combination of these contradictions human life is distorted like the face of a man who paints himself in varied colours. Pavananjay returned home with many hopes and aspirations but all his dreams were shattered. One buffet of fortune had destroyed all his dreams.

With staggering steps he went out of the palace and went straight to his mother, Ketumati. Ketumati was surprised to see him because he had met her only a short while ago. She said,

“Dear son what is the matter ?”

“Mother ! You have done a great injustice. You have ruined my life and thrown me into the flames of anguish.” Every word uttered by him was expressive of anguish and indignation.

“But what has happened ?”

“What can I say ? There is nothing that remains to be said. You made baseless accusations against Anjana who was absolutely innocent. You expelled her from the house without thinking about the circumstances... What else can I say ?”

“But my dear son in your absence she became pregnant.”

“This is absolutely false. I came here on that night and spent the night with her. It was my son that she was bearing in her womb. Did she not give any clarification or evidence ? Did she not show you my ring ?”

“She gave a clarification and she also showed me your ring. But I did not believe her words. How could I ? During the last twenty-two years you never even glanced at her. You always treated her with contempt. Under these circumstances I had to... Why only myself anyone else would have... done the same thing.”

“Of course, I made a mistake but how could a noble lady like you also commit such a blunder ? Were you not aware of her chastity and purity ? Were you not always admiring her virtues of purity and chastity ? You were never tired of praising her and of prevailing upon me to accept her. When that was so how could you so suddenly do such a thing ? How could such a noble lady suddenly commit a mistake ? How could such a noble lady suddenly become ignoble and immoral ?”

Mother you never cared to think of these things. You could not even wait for my coming. What a monstrous thing have you done ?” The tears streamed from his eyes. When he visualized the bitter circumstances under which she had to get away from Adityapur, he felt greatly grieved.

“I am going away from here. I will not come back until I find her. No one need wait for me for anything.” Having said

this, he turned back to leave Ketumati's chamber. Just then Ketumati held his hand and said,

"Where is the need for your going in search of her, dear son? I will at once send guards and spies and other officers, in all directions in search of her. They will certainly find out her whereabouts."

"No mother, I must make atonement for the mistake committed by you. Moreover, this tragedy is the result of my blunder. For twenty-two years I never refrained from continuously reprimanding her. I pushed her into the abyss of grief. Therefore, I myself should go in search of her." Having said this, he went away. Accompanied by Prahasit, he went travelling through the sky and reached Mahendrapur. Both the friends went straight to the palace of King Mahendra. At the entrance itself they met Prince Prasannakirti.

"Dear brother-in-law! You have come so unexpectedly?" Prasannakirti said, taking Pavananjay's hand into his.

"Is Anjana here?" Pavananjay asked eagerly.

Prasannakirti fell into deep thoughtfulness. He knew that when Anjana was expelled from Adityapur, Pavananjay had gone to the wars and that Pavananjay had returned from the wars on that day. He could see that Pavananjay was deeply agitated and worried.

"Have we done injustice to Anjana?" Thinking thus he became deeply disturbed and worried. He said, "Yes, she came here but...."

"Where is she now?"

"Please come in; I will tell you what happened."

"First, you tell me where Anjana is," Pavananjay's voice showed that he was very angry. His face had become red with anger. His eyes were red with indignation. Hearing the voice of Pavananjay King Mahendra with the Chief Minister came

running greatly amazed to see that his son-in-law had come unexpectedly.

"Dear son! When did you come? Please come into the palace. We will sit there and talk about everything," King Mahendra said in a serious tone.

"I have not come to take rest in your palace. I have come in search of Anjana. Where is she?" Pavananjay repeated his question looking angrily at King Mahendra.

"Dear son, do not even mention her name. You know she has brought disgrace to your family and to mine?"

"Enough of this nonsense. Stop talking thus about her. She has not stained anyone's honour. On the contrary, we have behaved like monsters and stained her honour. I tell you, she is a noble woman.... absolutely noble!"

"Oh! What am I hearing now! Is it a dream or reality? Then my daughter..... my dear daughter Anjana is innocent....?" King Mahendra felt as if thunder-struck. He felt that the whole world was reeling round him. He began to shudder. Prasannakirti also was greatly grieved to hear all this.

"Yes, king! She is pure and sacred like the Ganga and venerable like the Meru mountain. She is absolutely innocent. My mother on account of her ignorance of the situation accused her of ignoble conduct; and expelled her from Adityapur. She was brought here. It is only after knowing all this that I came here to take her back. Where is she? Please do not delay. Tell me at once. Where is she? I cannot bear separation from her. I must seek her pardon. I will atone for my mother's sin, if only I can meet her now."

Hearing Pavananjay's words, King Mahendra wept like a child. His heart began to break to pieces. A dark cloud seemed to have covered the eyes of Prince Prasannakirti. He lost consciousness and sank to the ground. The Chief Minister wiped his tears. The whole atmosphere became sad and gloomy.

"Then, is she not here ? Did she not come here ?" Pavananjay's heart overflowed with grief. He entertained countless fears and doubts regarding the safety of Anjana. His heart was torn with fears.

"Dear son, what shall I say ? I am ashamed of my conduct. I cannot even show my face to you. I have strangled my daughter's neck with my own hands. Like a poor cow she came here but I, overwhelmed with thoughts relating to our family-honour and blinded by my sense of prestige and honour, expelled her from here, after severely reprimanding her." King Mahendra said beating his head, with his voice shaken by grief.

"We do not know where she has gone. We do not know what has happened to her. Probably she has been knocking about from pillar to post, alone.... helpless. She must be wandering in the midst of wild forests, deep valleys and mountains. At that time our Chief Minister gave the right counsel, "She is innocent. Do not send her away," but I did not pay heed to his words. I didn't think even a little of her distress and anguish; on the other hand, foolishly, I pushed her into the ocean of sorrow," King Mahendra wept bitterly.

"Oh king ! What is the use of weeping now ? Now, our duty is to search for that noble lady without even a moment's delay. We should, at once, send our trusted spies and guards in all the directions and should find out her whereabouts. The Chief Minister said consoling the king and indicating their immediate duty.

"Dear son, you kindly stay here. Within a short time, our able guards and spies will bring us news of Anjana. All will be well. Kindly have patience....," The Chief Minister entreated Pavananjay to stay there.

"No, Chief Minister ! Until I can meet Anjana I cannot enter any palace; nor can I take rest anywhere. Till now, I have taken enough rest. That is why such a great injustice has been done to Anjana and she has had to face the humiliation of wandering from place to place," and accompanied by Prahasit

Pavananjay got ready to set off in search of Anjana. Prasanna-kirti held his hand and with his heart full of grief he said;

“Dear brother-in-law, I know very well that your heart is broken to smithereens by your separation from Anjana. Your heart and mind have been clouded by grief and anguish but do not make us greater sinners. Already we have committed a shameful action... A monstrous enormity... You kindly take rest here for sometime. Here and now, I take an oath that I will not eat food or drink water until I return with my sister, Anjana. Until then I will not enter this palace; nor will I lead this splendid royal life as a prince.”

“Prasannakirti! Please do not stop me. Kindly allow me to go. My mind is torn with grief and anguish. My soul is in deep anguish. Every drop of my blood is envenomed by grief. I cannot have peace of mind until I see Anjana alive and safe.”

Pavananjay who for twenty-two years kept away even from the shadow of Anjana and who treated her with bitter contempt was now deeply agitated by the separation from her. This is the peculiarity of the *Samsar*. One day people rain the cinders of anger upon somebody but the very next day they shower the flowers of love upon the same person. For sometime people treat a person with affection and experience joy, peace and felicity with that person but at another time they treat the same person with animosity and hostility. At one time, they kiss a person, at another time they kill the same person. One day, they make a garden of flowers in the heart of a person but the very next day they light the flames of sorrow and humiliation. Such is the way of the world. The *Samsar* abounds in such contradictions and calamities. That is why the enlightened seers always exhort people to achieve spiritual elevation and salvation because in that state the *Jiva* will be free from the confounding snares of attachment and hatred.

Nobody could stop Pavananjay from going out. Even the guard at the door shed tears and entreated him to stay but he did not give up his determination to go in search of Anjana. It was from this very door that once the divinely pure and chaste woman,

Anjana had gone away, ill-treated, repudiated and rejected by her father, mother and brother. She went away in bitter grief and humiliation. The door itself seemed to be silently staring at and rebuking King Mahendra and Prince Prasannakirti. It was at this door that once the heart of that innocent lady had been broken. It was at this door that one day there erupted a tremendous volcano in the heart of that noble lady. Every stone of the gate had become reddened by the drops of blood that flowed from her heart. If those stones could speak out their feelings and could describe that heart-rending sight, Pavananjay would have been petrified there. Pavananjay was terribly angry with his cruel destiny that was sporting with his life but he had no way to express his anger against Destiny except shedding tears. Accompanied by Prahasit, he went out of the city. For sometime he was caught in the tangles of thought wondering what he should do, where he should go and which path he should pursue to search for Anjana. No way flashed to him. Thinking silently for a while he said to Prahasit;

“Dear friend, Prahasit ! Now you please go back. Now I am going to wander about in unknown, desolate and intricate places and paths where at every step, I have to experience pain and discomfort. I will have to face countless difficulties and agonies. I will have to be pounded between mortar and pestle; and I do not like you to experience all these difficulties with me.”

“Dear prince ! Am I really hearing all this from your lips ? Ah ! what an excellent estimate have you made of my friendship and love ? Is friendship merely for sharing joys and sorrows ? Do you think that I will go away leaving you here just because you tell me to go. That means you have not understood your friend Prahasit fully. I wish to share your sorrows and joys and to stand by you through thick and thin. So give up your attempts to send me back and you too summon up some courage to face the difficulties ahead. We two shall travel together and find out the whereabouts of our goddess, Anjana. Dear friend, we should live or die together.”

“But what way shall we pursue ?”

"I do not have any clue regarding the way which we have to pursue."

"Dear prince ! We shall wander from village to village; from town to town and search for her. We shall search for her in thick forests and desolate areas. We shall search for her among all mountains and hills but at any cost, we should find out her whereabouts and we are surely going to succeed in our endeavour !"

Prahasit's irrepressible enthusiasm inspired new hopes in Pavananjay. He felt confident that he would surely find Anjana. On account of the joy born out of this hope he embraced Prahasit.

"Dear friend ! I think Anjana has not gone to any village or town; under any circumstances; but I am sure that she would have gone into the forests pursuing uneven paths. Probably, she has taken shelter in some caves or valleys of mountains.. Let us hope that she has not fallen a prey to some wild beasts." Pavananjay shuddered at this thought. Suddenly, his body was bathed in perspiration. This sudden and inauspicious thought made his hair stand on end.

"Dear prince ! Do not agitate yourself with such inauspicious thoughts. Anjana is a noble lady; a *Mahasati*, a woman of supreme virtues and even the wild beasts of the forest do not harm such a woman. Even terrible monsters and dreadful spirits become humble and helpless cows at the sight of such a noble lady. Under the influence of her divine virtues, they bow their heads and become calm and harmless." Prahasit thus praised the extraordinary purity and chastity of Anjana. On hearing this, Pavananjay's heart grew a little light.

The two friends began to travel through the trackless skies. They reached a lofty peak of the Vaithadhya mountain. The area was absolutely lonely and desolate. There neither human beings nor animals or birds were to be seen. They searched for Anjana in the whole area; but there was no sign of her anywhere. Searching for Anjana, they, step by step,

climbed down the mountain-peak. Down at the foot of the mountain they could see a number of large caves and valleys. They searched for her in every cave and among the hills; but they could not find any clue regarding her whereabouts.

Now, they thought it best to proceed on foot. They wandered about in dense forests; they searched for her in every valley and cave; but they found no sign of her. Days passed thus. Pavananjay was in deep despair. He was greatly agitated by fear. His mind was torn with worries and agitations. Even on the face of Prahāsīt, there appeared lines of despair. He silently followed Pavananjay. They went pursuing every path from place to place. They could not understand where they should look for Anjana.

Pavananjay gave up food and drink. He ate nothing; nor did he drink even water. He kept wandering from place to place hungry and thirsty calling out in a hoarse voice. "Anjana ! Anjana !" Prahāsīt became greatly worried. He did not know how to console and comfort Pavananjay. His patience had given way. He had no enthusiasm left in him to inspire hopes in Pavananjay. He searched for her in every part of the Vaithadhya mountains; and the surrounding areas; he had drawn a blank everywhere; and was in deep despair.

Wandering thus, they went into a deep valley in the Vaithadhya mountain. The sun had set. Gloom and silence prevailed everywhere. They could hear no sound there except the cries of wild animals. Pavananjay looked towards Prahāsīt. His face had been darkened by the dense clouds of despair. He looked at Pavananjay helplessly; and then he sat upon a rock that lay nearby. Pavananjay also sat beside him.

"Prahāsīt ! Now, you go back to Adityapur. Please convey to my parents the information that we have not been able to find any sign of Anjana though we searched for her over the whole earth. I will continue to search for her in these forests; yet if I cannot find any trace of that noble lady, at the end, I shall . "

“What do you propose to do at the end?”

“At the end, I shall fall into fires.”

“No, No ! Prince ! This should not take place under any circumstances. I shall never go away leaving you here.” Prahasit began to weep bitterly. He embraced Pavananjay. His broad chest was drenched with tears. It was, indeed, a heart-rending sight. Seeing that moving sight, even nature put on a gloomy look. The branches of trees and plants drooped. The sky looked bleak and blighted. The two friends sat there silently shedding tears.

“Prahasit ! You know the state of my mind very well. I cannot live even for a moment, without seeing Anjana. For twenty two years, I rejected her and kept her away with contempt. I used to run away even from her shadow. Now, the hour has come for my making atonement for my sin. Please go to Adityapur and inform my parents of the situation here; so that they might not be expecting me back home.”

Prahasit wept bitterly seeing his dear friend's miserable condition and the way in which cruel Destiny had trampled upon his aspirations and ambitions; and had crushed them to pieces under its iron heels. He despised the heartless and cruel sway of Destiny; but what could he do ? He was completely unsuccessful in facing the cruel way of Destiny and time. Today he felt that his dear friend was moving away from him. He felt as though he was disappearing into some dense darkness bearing on his head the bundle of the ruins of all his dreams and aspirations. He tried his best to prevent Pavananjay from going away thus. But all his efforts were in vain. All his efforts were fruitless and futile. He could not at all agree to return to Adityapur leaving his friend to pursue his path beset with difficulties and dangers. His conscience did not permit him to do so. His heart experienced great anguish and seemed to be crying out.

“Dear friend, whatever you may say I will never go away leaving you alone here. I will unhesitatingly follow you on

whatever path you may choose to pursue and if any difficulties or dangers arise I am fully ready to face them with you," Prahāsīt said with a determined voice.

Pavanānjay fell into deep thoughtfulness. He knew very well that Prahāsīt would never allow him to leap into fires and he would certainly leap into fires along with him. Pavanānjay fell into an indescribable quandary. He began to think deeply over the situation. "Somehow or the other I must prevail upon Prahāsīt to return to Adityapur. Otherwise, he will not allow me to act according to my plan."

"Prahāsīt, please think a little calmly. If you go to Adityapur and tell my parents about the situation they too will make their attempts to search for Anjana and they may be able to find some clue to her whereabouts," Pavanānjay said looking into the eyes of Prahāsīt.

"Then you too accompany me to Adityapur. How can I go alone? Why should we not both return to Adityapur?"

"My returning to Adityapur now is out of the question. I will search for her in these forests, in the valleys and all the caves in this area.... and on account of my not returning to Adityapur my parents will concentrate on the task of searching for her."

The night had far advanced. Prahāsīt's eyes had grown heavy on account of sleeplessness and weariness. Even Pavanānjay was tired but he could not get a wink of sleep. He was being consumed by the flames of separation. Prahāsīt lay down upon that rock. Within a short time he slept soundly. Pavanānjay sat beside him motionless and mute. The night advanced further. Suddenly, an idea occurred to Pavanānjay. He looked at Prahāsīt who was sound asleep. He slowly stood up. He placed a few steps to go away leaving Prahāsīt there. But then he suddenly stopped. His heart did not agree to his going away thus.

"If you go away from your friend thus, deceiving him, how would he feel? What would be the effect of your action upon

him ? Will he not go wandering in search of you ? How many difficulties and dangers will he have to face alone ?” Pavananjay heard the voice of his conscience and he refrained from going away. Meanwhile, Prahasit opened his eyes. He screamed; “Dear Prince !” The stream of Pavananjay’s thoughts was shaken.

“What is the matter ?”

“I am going to Adityapur.”

“Really !”

“Yes, if I go there, they will make larger attempts to search for Anjana. I feel confident that we will find Anjana somewhere and that she is alive and safe somewhere. But do not take any fool-hardy step. If you cannot find Anjana anywhere here, you also come away to Adityapur.”

Pavananjay was silently watching Prahasit with fixed eyes.

“Dear friend, probably you are surprised at my sudden decision to go to Adityapur. There is a reason for this. When I was sleeping I had a spiritual experience..... A spiritual sensation which made me feel that I must go to Adityapur and make arrangements for searching for Anjanadevi.”

Pavananjay began to think about what Prahasit had said. After having thought for a while he said, “Are we really going to find Anjana ?” His heart was torn with conflicting emotions. While he was diving in the depths of his imagination, Prahasit woke him up from his reverie and said, “Well dear friend, I take leave of you. Yes, there is another point. Impatience causes insanity. Do not think of any foolish step.... I am sure that within a short time we will hear some auspicious news.”

The two friends embraced each other and wept bitterly. Then, taking leave of Pavananjay, Prahasit set off towards Adityapur, travelling through the sky.

Pavananjay kept looking at Prahasit as long as he could be seen travelling through the sky. After that, the tears flowed

from his eyes. His heart was greatly agitated. He became unconscious and sank to the ground. Who was there to sprinkle cold water on his face to enable him to revive his consciousness? Who was there to fan air to him with fans studded with gems? Who was there to pat on his head affectionately? What other evidence can be there to say that life is meaningless, and that human beings are really helpless? The desire to attain fame by placing this pitiable event before people arises only in the cruel hearts of those who have no knowledge of the human heart. We should experience agitation and grief witnessing this pitiable sight.... witnessing the broken heart of Pavananjay. We have to share his grief with compassion. If we can set together the pieces of his heart and if our heart can be useful for this purpose we should be ready to make that sacrifice.

It is wrong to think that Pavananjay was grieved thus because of his passion for Anjana and because of his desire for sensual delights. We should not think that he was experiencing that anguish on account of his sensual cravings and his desire for sensual delights. If we think so we would have done a great injustice to that noble man; and we would not have visualized that great soul in the right perspective. There had appeared in Pavananjay's heart an extraordinary regard and affection for Anjana who was the very embodiment of sublime virtues. He loved her for those virtues. Moreover, the anguish he was experiencing was his way of repenting his total indifference towards that noble woman for twenty-two years and the injustice he had done her. It was this fire of repentance that was burning in his heart. He was angry with himself; and it was this anger that was consuming him and the result was that he was moving heaven and earth to find out Anjana and he was determined to leap into fires if he could not find her.

This is a special characteristic of great men. Their nature is to admire the virtues of those whom they have treated improperly. They admire their virtues after realizing their own mistakes and after this realization they also repent their action and effect a change in their conduct and behaviour.

Pavananjay recovered his consciousness. He set off from there. After crossing some mountains and valleys he entered a forest called Bhutvan. He began wandering crying, "Anjana.... Anjana! Where are you? He went on searching for Anjana in that forest day and night. But he could not find her. He was filled with deep despair. He lost all hopes of finding Anjana.

Fatigued and exhausted, he sat beneath a tree utterly stupefied. He did not like to live any more in this world. He came to the conclusion that he could attain peace and felicity only in the lap of death. He decided to embrace death. He looked around and found that there was nothing in that area except the dry and fallen leaves.

XXVII

ONLY TRUTH WILL BE VICTORIOUS

Prahasit reached Adityapur.

He, straight went to the palace of King Prahlad. At that time, King Prahlad and Queen Ketumati, with their faces rendered bleak by bitter anguish, sat in their chamber thinking deeply about the situation; and discussing it. Just then, Prahasit entered the chamber. Naturally, Queen Ketumati saw him. She stood up at once.

"Where is Pavananjay?" she asked in a voice shaken by agitation.

"I have come alone," Prahasit gave a point-blank reply.

"Pavananjay has not come.... Probably he won't come." The tears streamed from Prahasit's eyes. He could not say anything more.

"What did you say?"

"Yes, mother. We wandered about from place to place, among mountains and valleys in search of Anjana. We searched for her in forests and in caves but we could not find any clue to her whereabouts. At last overcome with despair, Pavananjay insisted upon my returning to Adityapur and he has been wandering in the forest."

Queen Ketumati began to weep bitterly. Her anguish was pitiable. King Prahlad also could not help weeping. The tears flowed from his eyes also like streams.

"But why did you come away leaving my son alone in those forests? He will wander through the forests without food or drink. Who is there to take care of him? Where will he go? What will he do? You should have remained with him but you too have come back....," Ketumati began rebuking Prahasit.

"Mother, now instead of wasting time in lamentations we should make all attempts to search for Anjana."

"Alas! what shall I do? A sinner like me has to reap what she has sown. I made baseless accusations against Anjana who was absolutely innocent and expelled her from here. She implored me with folded hands to allow her to stay here. She tried to explain the situation to me... She also showed me Pavananjay's signet-ring. But oh! I did not care for what she said. I caused great grief to that noble lady. I did everything to cause grief to her. It is on account of that sin of mine that today my son is separated from me. I have cut my own feet with an axe."

"Mother! Stop weeping. Even now, Pavananjay can come back to Adityapur. We should do everything in our power to search for Anjana. If in course of time we cannot find her Pavananjay will end his life by leaping into fires."

Queen Ketumati became unconscious and dropped to the ground. King Prahlad began to shake with fear and grief.

At once, all the members of the royal family and the attendants gathered there. Hearing that Prahasit had returned even the old Chief Minister came. Everywhere, the dark shadow of agitation, grief and unexpressed anguish appeared.

This is how the vicious wheel of *Samsar* moves. People experience happiness when their desires are fulfilled; and experience misery when their desires are frustrated. If in the *Samsar* people secure what they desire at one moment, the very next moment, they will have to feel baulked and keep rubbing their hands in frustration. If at one time people find happiness abounding around them very soon they find themselves crushed under a mountain of misery, with the result that human beings

keep swinging between happiness and sorrow. Therefore, this *Samsar* should be renounced and man should become a sadhu and even as a sadhu he must carry out such endeavours as would save him from getting lost in the vicious circle of happiness and sorrow caused by fulfilment and frustration.

Prahasit said to the King in a serious tone :

“Oh King, we should, at once, send intelligent and capable guards and spies in search of Anjana. At the same time we should also search for Pavananjay.”

The ministers, the commanders, the lords and the high officials of the state were present. King Prahlad, at once, gave orders to his chief commander :

“Dear Commander ! you must send officers and guards to search for Anjana in the cities among the northern ranges of Vaithadya mountains.”

“If you find Anjana, instead of returning to Adityapur you must come and meet us in the mountains situated at a distance of five-hundred Yojanas to the east of Mahendranagar. We will be searching for Anjana in that area,” Prahasit gave an intelligent plan.

King Prahlad sent the Chief Commander and hundreds of intelligent guards in that direction and then he ordered another commander :

“You please go in the southern direction. Search for Anjana in all the villages, towns and cities in that area and then come and meet us there.”

“As commanded by your Highness !” saying this the commander set off in that direction taking with him chosen guards and soldiers.

“Dear king ! You please send a messenger to Mahendrapur and convey to King Mahendra our plan of searching for Anjana so that he too may make arrangements to search for Anjana.” said Prahasit.

Accordingly, King Prahlad sent a messenger to Mahendrapur with that message.

"Now we should set off at once and meet Pavananjay." Having said this Prahasit got ready an airship for King Prahlad. Prahasit set off by the *Viman* taking with him King Prahlad, Queen Ketumati and the Chief Minister. He brought the airship to the place where he had left Pavananjay. He landed the airship and said :

"Mother, it was here that I left Pavananjay when I came to Adityapur. So we have to search for him here. He would not have gone far from this place.

Leaving Queen Ketumati in the viman, King Prahlad, the Chief Minister, and Prahasit searched for Pavananjay in that area but they could not find any sign of Pavananjay there. Tired of searching for Pavananjay, the three stood beneath a dry and withered tree. They began to think how they should proceed to search for Pavananjay. Just then an idea flashed to the Chief Minister. He knew the signs of foot-prints. He observed carefully the foot-prints in that area; and said with surprise. "It is certain that he has gone this way." On hearing the words of the Chief Minister, Prahasit also observed the foot-prints and felt certain that they were his friend's foot-prints. Entreating the king to sit in the viman and to follow them slowly they began to follow the foot-prints. Step by step, the foot-prints became more and more clear. They walked thus for about five or six hours and then reached the forest called Bhuthvan. But from that point the foot-prints were missing. Though they tried their best they could not notice any foot-prints; nor could they find any clues according to which they could go further. The forest ahead was dense. They did not think it proper to enter the forest. King Prahlad's viman also arrived there. Alighting from the viman King Prahlad said :

"In which direction do the foot prints lead ?"

"Dear King ! The foot-prints are not to be seen here but it seems certain that he has gone into the forest."

"Then, why delay ? Let us enter the forest and search for him."

"If we proceed thus we will not be successful because this forest is wild and terrible. We may go in one direction and Pavananjay might wander away in some other direction."

They fell into deep thoughtfulness. After a few moments Prahasit said;

"We shall sit in the airship and fly slowly over the forest at such a low level that we can observe every nook and corner of the forest. In this manner we can search the whole forest."

"You are right," the Chief Minister approved of Prahasit's suggestion. Accordingly all sat in the Viman and it began to hover slowly over the Bhuthvan.

* * * *

Meanwhile the Chief Commander had begun searching for Anjana carefully in all the towns and cities in the eastern area. In every city, he met some intelligent people and from them he secured some information. By virtue of his intelligence, ability and relations with people he secured the help of many people and carried out the search for Anjana in a very capable manner. Time was passing. The night followed the day and the day followed the night. Some days passed thus. The search was going on very briskly but they could not find any sign of Anjana. The Chief Commander began to give way to despair. He felt that his endeavours were going to fail. Yet he continued the search using all his intelligence and abilities. His friends and companions lost all hopes but he continued the search with increased vigour and enthusiasm. One day his caravan reached a city called Suryapur.

He pitched his tents outside the city and then he went into the city taking some confidential guards with him. They went in disguise into the city.

Passing through the various roads in the city they reached the central part of the city. There they heard the loud conver-

sation that was going on among some five or six people near a shop. They stood carefully listening to their conversation.

"Since the time Manasveg, the Vidyadhar king of the city of Hanupur brought his niece to the city the kingdom has been prospering by leaps and bounds," said an old man.

"Dear brother ! Wherever a noble soul places her steps, happiness and prosperity increase in that area."

"Have you heard of this ?" a merchant said,

"What is it ?"

"The king's niece's son is still a pretty child and he has become the apple of every one's eyes. He is the darling of everyone. It seems once he fell down from an airship and then nothing happened to him but the mountain on which he fell, it seems, broke to pieces."

"But I can't believe all this", said one.

"Why ? You say that Manasveg's niece is fortunate and that she brings prosperity wherever she goes but I have heard that she has been abandoned by her husband. Would her husband abandon her if she were really noble and virtuous ?"

"You have heard only some false rumours or your information is incomplete. She has been expelled not by her husband but by her mother-in-law. My daughter who came from Hanupur told me all this."

"Whatever it may be would anyone expel a noble and virtuous lady ?" the merchant repeated his question.

For a few moments, they were lost in thinking about the matter. Just then a young man who was sitting in the shop came out, sat near the merchants and said;

"Uncle, do you think that noble souls do not suffer ? In this world many noble souls have been crushed under the mountain of misery and anguish."

"Then, who would call such persons noble?"

"Then you tell us how you define a noble person? You seem to think that those who are praised in the world; and those who are affluent are noble."

"Yes sir! That is the way of the world. That is the way the world treats people,"

"Yet, you seem to have forgotten this point. People are not noble just because they have wealth and grandeur. Noble people are those who possess the virtues of enlightenment and forgiveness; and who embody politeness; and in whose hearts, the Paramatma dwells." The young man said explaining what kind of people are noble.

"Does such a soul also have to experience sorrow?" The uncle said to his nephews.

"Yes, uncle! Even such noble people have to experience anguish on account of the sins they might have committed in their *Purvajanma*, but they do not deem it sorrow; they bear with their sorrows naturally. Hence, it will not take much time for their sorrows to disappear."

The Chief Commander was overjoyed to hear this conversation of those merchants. He easily found out the whereabouts of Anjana. At once, he returned to his tent greatly delighted with what he had heard. He said to his assistants:

"Dear friends; today, our efforts have borne fruit. I have found out the whereabouts of Anjanadevi."

"Where is that noble lady?" all asked in one voice, greatly overcome with surprise and joy,

"We have to go at once to Hanupur. The noble lady, Anjana and her son are safe there."

The assistants shouted, "Victory to Anjanadevi!" Their joy knew no bounds.

Then, they all sat in their airship and set off in the direction of Hanupur. Very soon, the airship began to fly over Hanupur. They saw the sky-high Jin temples of Hanupur. The commander landed the Viman on the outskirts of the city; and taking his assistants with him, he went into the city. The Commander was greatly delighted to see the unexampled splendour and beauty of the city. The hearts of all blossomed like flowers with delight. Passing through the roads of the city, they reached the court-yard, in front of the palace. At the entrance of the palace, there were armed guards keeping a vigilant watch. The commander went forward a few steps; and said to the guard :

“Dear sir ! We desire to meet His Highness Manasveg.”

“Noble man ! May I know who you are ?”

“We have come from Adityapur bearing the message of King Prahlad.”

The guard, at once, went into the palace. At that time, King Manasveg was in his Counsel-chamber carrying on some political discussions. The guard entered the chamber; saluted the king politely; and said :

“Your Highness ! The messenger sent by King Prahlad of Adityapur desires to meet you.”

“Bring him in with honour,” Hearing the name Adityapur, King Manasveg fell into deep thoughtfulness. He sent information to Anjana about the arrival of a messenger from Adityapur. Meanwhile, the Commander entered the chamber, and saluted the King politely.

King Manasveg extended a fitting reception to the Commander. He offered him a seat of dignity. Meanwhile, Anjana also came into the chamber with an unconcealed enthusiasm. Vasanta Tilaka also was with her. Running and leaping behind them, the pretty child Hanuman also followed them into the chamber. As soon as he saw Anjana, the commander stood up; and saluted her with great politeness.

Anjana with a smiling face sat on a seat. Hanuman sat in her lap, clinging to her. He kept staring at the Commander, with fixed eyes.

"We hope that all are well at Adityapur." King Manasveg said as a matter of courtesy. The Commander merely shed tears, in reply. His throat was choked with grief.

The adamant heart of the Commander who struck terror into the hearts of the enemy-armies, melted away as he thought of the situation at Adityapur. As he looked towards Anjana, his eyes welled up with tears.

"Noble man ! What is the matter ? Are all well at Adityapur ?" Manasveg asked the Commander.

Anjana's heart began to palpitate with all sorts of doubts and fears.

"Dear King ! Now Adityapur is plunged in sorrow and anguish. Since the time Anjanadevi was expelled from the city falsely accused of ignobility, the people of Adityapur have been in deep agitation and distress unable to do anything."

"Did Pavananjay return from Lanka ?"

"Yes, sir ! I too had gone with him to the wars. We returned safely to Adityapur. On account of Pavananjay's extraordinary intelligence and political wisdom the two kingdoms were saved from unnecessary violence and loss. As soon as returning to Adityapur, Pavananjay went straight to the palace of Anjana but he was greatly shocked and agonised when he did not find her there. He came to know of the terrible injustice that had been done to Anjana. He became greatly excited over the occurrence. On account of agitation and sorrow, he was beside his wits. At once, he set off in search of Anjana taking Prahasit with him. They wandered in search of Anjana from place to place, from town to town, from city to city and they also wandered in dense dark forests and deep valleys in search of her. They searched for her in every cave and crevice in the mountains but when they did not find any trace of the noble lady

they fell into deep despair. Pavananjay sent Prahasit to Adityapur and.....”

“Then what happened ?” Anjana said in bitter agitation.

“He had sent a message by Prahasit that....” The Commander felt choked. On hearing this Anjana felt as if a volcano had erupted in her heart.

“Pavananjay’s message was that he would search for Anjana in all the caves, valleys and forests and if he did not find her he would....”

“What would he do ?” A flash of fear ran through her heart like a lightning. Her eyes were wide open with fear and anxiety.

“That he would commit suicide by leaping into fires.” Even before the commander could complete his sentence Anjana wept bitterly. She became unconscious and fell on the ground. Even the child Hanuman was mute and motionless, for a few moments. Then, seeing his mother weeping aloud and falling, he too began to weep clinging to his mother. All the members of the royal family and the officials gathered in the chamber. All were breathless when they saw Anjana falling down unconscious. They sprinkled cool water on her face and helped her to recover her consciousness. But even though she recovered her consciousness she continued to weep like a helpless child. She said sobbing;

“A loyal wife enters fire when she is separated from her husband because for a noble lady life without her husband is unbearable and pointless.” But why should a great man like you enter fire and commit suicide when you can marry any number of women. You can get any number of women like me who are ready to suffer effacement and even death for your sake. The pangs of separation from the beloved for a man are transient.... Yet on account of your separation from me you have thought of entering fires whereas I a wretched sinner though separated from you for such a long time have been alive. I curse

myself. Indeed, what a great difference is there between you and me ? You are a man of extraordinary spiritual excellence and strength and I am absolutely frail. I am a coward. You are a gem but I am a piece of glass compared to you. You have not committed any mistake; nor did my mother-in-law or my parents commit any mistake. The fault lies with my misfortune ... oh !”

“Dear child Anjana ! Please try to be calm. This is not a time for giving way to sorrow but somehow or the other we have to search for Pavananjay without any delay.”

“Oh King ! Even a moment’s delay can be calamitous to us. We have to set off at once, without wasting a single moment.”

“But in what direction shall we proceed ?”

“Please do not worry about it. Prahasit has already told me where we have to meet them. First we shall go there and then act according to his suggestion.”

“Very good ! We will get ready at once. Dear child, Anjana ! All of you also get ready. We have to set off at once.”

Within a few moments King Manasveg’s Viman was ready. Manasveg, Anjana, Vasanta Tilaka, Hanuman, Anjana’s aunt and others sat in the Viman. The commander also got ready his airship. Within a short time both the airships began flying over the mountain ranges of Vaithadya.

* * * *

Prahasit was taking the airship carefully over the Bhuthvan. King Prahlad and the Chief Minister also were watching every nook and corner of the forest with great incisiveness and concentration. Prahasit circled over the forest three times but Pavananjay was not to be seen anywhere nor could they see any sign of him.

Just then the Chief Minister said, “Please land the airship in some safe place.”

“But we have not yet gone towards the northern part. First, let us carefully search for him everywhere in this area; then we can land the plane in some safe place.”

Prahasit turned the airship in the northern direction. It began to hover over the northern part of the Bhuthvan. Just when they had gone some distance over the forest, they heard the noise of somebody crying out in the forest.

“Prahasit ! Stop the Viman here. We hear the voice of somebody in this area.”

King Prahlad tried to find out from which direction the sound was coming. He felt that the sound was emanating from somewhere nearby. The voice which came breaking the silence of the forest was clearly audible now.

“Oh you divinities of nature ! I am Pavananjay, the son of King Prahlad of Adityapur. The noble woman, Anjana is my wife. Though she was an angel in purity and chastity I abandoned her and kept her away for twenty two years. Though she was innocent, I treated her with contempt. Though she tried her best to convince me of her purity, I kept her away heartlessly. I threw her into the fires of anguish soon after her marriage. I treated her with bitter contempt; on every occasion, I reprimanded her and ridiculed her. When she came to me and expressed her wishes for my victory and safety, I reprimanded her and rejected her. When in the midst of the serene atmosphere of the banks of the *Manas Sarovar*, I realised my blunder, I went straight to her palace with my dear friend Prahasit. I spent that night in her company. I enjoyed a happy union with her and then in the morning, I gave her my signet-ring; and returned to the banks of the *Manas Sarovar*.”

“Oh you divinities of nature ! My wife, Anjana became pregnant. My mother thinking that she was unfaithful to me, expelled her from Adityapur. Thus, on account of my blunder, that noble woman was forced to knock about from pillar to post. She had to suffer all sorts of indignities and consequent anguish on account of my ignorant and thoughtless action. When I

returned home after the war, I came to know of what had occurred, and I became greatly worried. I cursed myself; and began to treat myself with contempt. I came in search of her and left no stone unturned in searching for her. I have searched for her in every nook and corner of these forests and mountains; but I have not been able to find her. How can I find her? Can we ever retrace a gem that has fallen into the ocean? I have been maddened by this futile search. My existence has been futile. I am being consumed in the fires of the anguish caused by separation from her. Now, I cannot bear with this separation from her; and I cannot live without her. Now you tell me what I should do. Where shall I go? How can I show my black face to anyone? It would be better if I die leaping into fires and thus end my contemptible life."

"Oh you divinities of nature! If you find my dear wife anywhere, kindly convey to her the message that her husband unable to bear with the separation from her ended his life by leaping into fires."

And he recited *Shri Namaskar Mahamantra* and when he leaped to fall into the fires burning there, King Prahlad who was in the airship held him in his arms. Pavananjay tried to get rid of the hold and when he could not, he fretted angrily.

"Who is it that is stopping me thus? Please allow me to fall into the fires and to burn to ashes because I am already consumed with the fires of the separation from my noble wife. Instead of living without Anjana it is better for me to die and to seek peace and felicity in death."

"I am your father, King Prahlad. I am a sinner," he wept bitterly while saying this. "Dear son! Kindly excuse me. I committed a great sin in ill-treating my daughter-in-law. I acted cruelly towards her though she was absolutely innocent. This sin of mine cannot be washed away. Your mother has already committed a blunder in sheer ignorance and thoughtlessness. Now, you too do not venture to commit this horrible

action. Have patience... Have strength of mind.... Have equanimity." King Prahlad said endeavouring to console and comfort him. Queen Ketumati also weeping bitterly entreated her son not to leap into the fires. Prahasit and the Chief Minister were still going round by the airship expecting the arrival of other commanders and the Chief Commander. They were looking in all directions with anxious expectation.

Just then, they noticed the airship by which the Chief Commander and Manasveg were coming. Prahasit's heart bloomed into bliss like the daisy. Greatly delighted at the sight of the airship he shouted aloud....

"Victory to King Prahlad. Our Chief Commander has returned with the noble lady Anjana." Then without even a moment's delay Prahasit took his airship towards Manasveg's airship. He hoisted the royal flag of Adityapur on his airship. In reply to this the Chief Commander also hoisted a flag on his airship. All their friends and companions were greatly delighted and gave out cries of victory which reverberated throughout the Bhuthvan. Prahasit was greatly delighted to see the noble lady Anjana and the boy, Hanuman sitting in Manasveg's airship. After having landed the airships at a safe place they went hurriedly towards the burning pyre. Pavananjay was standing there in a calm mood and with equanimity. Manasveg and Anjana went forward and bowed to the feet of King Prahlad.

King Prahlad shed tears of joy. He affectionately embraced Manasveg, the king of Vidyadhars. He took up the boy, Hanuman and placed him in his lap. Queen Ketumati looked towards Anjana and wept bitterly;

"Dear daughter! Kindly forgive me," Queen Ketumati tried to fall at her feet but she stopped her holding her hands.

"Mother, it is not your fault. All this is the result of the sin I committed in my *Purvajanma*... You were only an instrument not the cause...." Anjana's words removed the load of guilt that was weighing upon the heart of Queen Ketumati. She was relieved of her anguish.

Anjana overwhelmed with joy at the sight of her dear husband fell at his feet. They were both delighted to meet each other and Anjana's heart which was withering away bloomed again joyfully.

Prahasit stood away watching Pavananjay and Anjana. His joy knew no bounds.

King Prahlad praised Manasveg's action of taking his niece to his palace and said in a voice shaken by emotion . . . "Oh king, how can I ever return your extraordinary benefaction. You have saved my family and my prestige from ruin. Your name shall be written in golden letters in the history of the royal family of Adityapur."

"My dear King, I have been only an instrument. It is Anjana's own merit (*punya*) that saved her from a disaster," Manasveg said with great politeness.

"In fact, you have become one of my dearest relatives and well-wishers. You are really a great well-wisher of our family. You have bestowed a great benefaction upon my family by rescuing my daughter-in-law from a disaster," King Prahlad again praised Manasveg.

"If our daughter-in-law had not been found we would not have lived We would certainly have embraced death," Queen Ketumati said to Manasveg looking towards him with her eyes full of heart-felt gratitude. She took Hanuman into her lap and kissed him. She was almost mad with delight when she saw her handsome grand-son and when she heard his sweet words.

King Prahlad ordered his Chief Commander to organize a grand jubilation, to celebrate the happy event.

Accordingly, the Chief commander by virtue of his magical and supernatural powers created there a magnificent garden and a grand Jin temple, within a few moments and Bhuthvan became the Jinendran. He created magnificent mansions which showed themselves to be models of architectural excellence.

He sent a messenger to Mahendranagar to invite King Mahendra and his family to the celebration which had been planned there. In consequence, King Mahendra arrived there with his family.

All the relatives and friends met in the Bhuthvan. Their joy knew no bounds. They felt grateful to the Paramatma and were plunged in a heartfelt devotion for him. All rendered their devotion to the Paramatma by singing holy songs and by means of dances and other activities. After the celebrations and jubilations were over, Manasveg entreated all the relatives and friends who had gathered there to visit Hanupur on that occasion.

Who would not accept such a happy invitation as that of Manasveg! Both King Prahlad and King Mahendra felt grateful to Manasveg. He who does not feel grateful to his benefactor is not a human being.

All sat in their respective airships and travelled to Hanupur. Prahasit's airship was leading the rest. Pavananjay, Anjana, Vasanta and Hanuman sat in it. The airship carrying King Prahlad and King Mahendra followed it. The Chief commander's airship was at the rear. The airships flew towards Hanupur.

XXVIII

THE SON EXCELS THE FATHER

Is there anyone in this world whose life is not ensnared in the tangles of problems ? Whose life is free from calamities and impediments ? Whether a man is a householder or a sadhu, as long as his soul is in the body, he has to face internal and external impediments and problems which keep agitating him. A man devoid of mental and spiritual strength becomes an easy target to those calamities and is crushed down while the man who possesses intellectual and spiritual strength crushes all his impediments and calamities under his heel and proceeds on his path with courage and confidence, undaunted by the difficulties and disasters that terrify weaker spirits.

Life deals its hammer-strokes to men of virtue and truthfulness, as well as to ignoble and sinful people. A mountain of calamities fell upon the head of Anjana. A terrible tempest raged in her life. A tremendous storm rose and shook her to the foundations of her being but that great woman remained unshaken by that tempest of calamities, taking her foot-hold upon truthfulness. So, the storm blew over; and again peace and felicity appeared.

All reached Hanupur. King Manasveg issued a proclamation desiring his people to organize magnificent celebrations and jubilations in the city.. For eight days, the people organized worship and other spiritual activities in the Jin temples. Manasveg gave away countless gifts with overflowing magnanimity. Prisoners were released from prisons. Dances and other jubilations were organized in every street and lane of the city. The

whole city began to sway in joy and jubilation. In every house, people were adoring the noble virtues of Anjana and Pavananjay.

Soon after the celebrations were over, King Prahlad and King Mahendra sought Manasveg's leave to return to their cities. Manasveg insisted upon their staying there for some more time. But both the kings had come away without making proper arrangements for the maintenance of order and administration in their cities, in their absence. Much time had passed since they had left their cities. Therefore, they had to return to their cities urgently. King Manasveg gave them a hearty send-off.

King Prahlad requested Pavananjay and Anjana to accompany him to Adityapur taking Hanuman with them but Pavananjay was not willing to go to Adityapur, at present. Moreover, King Manasveg was not willing to send away Anjana and Hanuman to Adityapur so soon. When King Prahlad and Queen Ketumati insisted that Pavananjay, Anjana and Hanuman should accompany them, Pavananjay said politely;

"Dear father ! Do not think that we are angry with you or with mother and that we are unwilling to accompany you on account of that reason. The truth is Anjana and Hanuman naturally love to stay here for some more time. Moreover, it is not proper to go away, against the wishes of her uncle. There will not be much delay in our coming to Adityapur. We will come there sometime later."

Naturally, Pavananjay's old father shed tears. His bright face became bleak but he was silent. He knew everything. He knew that Anjana was a woman of spotless character and that Ketumati had made false accusations against her. King Prahlad also felt guilty because he had given his silent consent to the steps taken by his queen. He knew that the queen as well as he had to pay for that sinful action. In fact, in a way he was ashamed of returning to Adityapur without Pavananjay and Anjana. Queen Ketumati also tried to prevail upon her son and daughter-in-law to accompany them to Adityapur, but Pavananjay was firm. At the end, he said clearly and firmly; "Mother,

believe me. I am not insisting upon our staying here. If Anjana agrees to come to Adityapur I am also ready."

"Oh King ! Please do not insist upon Anjana's accompanying you. Anjana and Hanuman will remain here for sometime. They have become a part and parcel of our family and our city. If they go away we will feel greatly unhappy. Even if on account of your insistence I agree to their going with you, her aunts, her sisters and the citizens of the Hanupur will not allow her to go away, because our life will be bleak without Hanuman and Anjana," Manasveg said humbly.

"Let it be so father ! Whenever you send word to us we will come to Adityapur, at once. We have to show Hanuman his palace and his city !" Pavananjay said looking towards the boy, Hanuman. King Prahlad took up Hanuman into his arms and Hanuman in his own child-like manner lisped "Dear grand father, where are you going away ?" Hanuman's words which were like crystals of sugar filled King Prahlad's heart with joy.

"Dear grand-son. We are going to your house."

"This is my house," Hanuman said looking towards Pavananjay. King Prahlad found no words to give a reply to Hanuman, his dear grand-son and to explain to him what he meant. He stood speechless.

Just then, the Chief Commander came; and announced, "Your Highness ! the airship is ready."

"Yes, we are also ready," King Mahendra and King Prahlad went out of the chamber. The two kings sat in their respective airships with their families. Pavananjay and Anjana bowed to all politely and affectionately. All joyfully bestowed their benedictions upon the couple and blessed Hanuman saying that he should become a great hero and a man of cultural and spiritual excellence. Soon, the airships began to fly in the sky.

After giving a hearty send-off to them, Manasveg held Pavananjay's hand and took him into his chamber. Offering him a seat of dignity near him he said in a serious tone,

"Pavananjay, you need not have any hesitation here. Now it is your responsibility to carry out the administration of Hanupur."

"Uncle, I will assist you in whatever way I can but you must carry out the administration yourself."

"Dear Pavananjay ! Now I wish to retire from active life. My aspiration is to spend the remainder of my life in worshipping and glorifying Lord Jineshwar and in carrying out spiritual activities. Therefore, you must take over the responsibility of ruling over the country."

Pavananjay began to think deeply about the proposal. "There is nothing to think so deeply about this matter. From tomorrow you stay beside me and acquaint yourself with all the secrets of the administration of the country. Acquaint yourself with our ministers and then carry out the duty of ruling over the country." Manasveg had planned a magnificent future for Pavananjay and he had built a magnificent palace for him. Pavananjay occupied that palace on an auspicious day. Prahasit and Vasanta Tilaka also lived in the same palace.

One day finding a suitable opportunity, Anjana said smiling... "Will Vasanta remain unmarried throughout her life?"

"You have to think of it. What do I know about it."

"What can I think of? She does not seem to love anyone except me!"

"I have an idea....."

"What is it?"

"Prahasit can marry Vasanta Tilaka....."

"Then why delay?"

"Very well. You first find out Vasanta's mind about this point."

“Will Prahasit agree to marry her ?”

“Nobody can go against your wishes....” Anjana felt a little shy. Pavananjay was extremely happy to have become reunited with Anjana and to please her he was prepared to do anything. He would move heaven and earth to please her.

Anjana and Pavananjay lived happily at Hanupur. In course of time, Vasanta and Prahasit were married. They too lived in the same palace with great happiness. Hanuman grew up in the lap of affection. He was given excellent training and education. His character was formed by the excellent culture that surrounded him in the family.

Pavananjay engaged experts in various branches of learning to train and educate Hanuman and to lay the foundations of his future life. Pavananjay bestowed great attention on Hanuman's education and upbringing. Hanuman also displayed exceptional intellectual and spiritual potentialities and mastered the various *Shastras* with ease. In course of time, Hanuman became a supreme master of the various *Shastras*. He also mastered the arts of war and became a mighty warrior. Added to all this he possessed extraordinary physical strength. Therefore, his life like a creeper grew excellently watered by his education and the culture surrounding him and he became an invincible hero in the Vidyadhara world.

In course of time, Anjana led him to the depths of spiritual knowledge and enlightenment. She made him attain self-realization. She explained to him how the soul is enslaved by *Karmas*. She taught him the doctrines of *Punya* (merit) and *Papa* (sin). She inspired in him the determination to encounter *Karmas* with spiritual vigilance. She also showed him the lofty path of spiritual elevation.

During the nights before going to sleep she narrated to him the thrilling stories of the spiritual heroism of the great Tirthankars. Hanuman was always interested in hearing those stories and he used to be moved deeply by them identifying himself with such spiritual heroes. When he heard those stories his

heart danced in delight like a peacock and in the depths of his heart there arose a tremendous devotion for the Paramatma. He came to realize that the ultimate aim of existence is the attainment of Moksha.

While giving him such inspiring guidance and instruction she took care to keep away from Hanuman the sorrows she had experienced because if he came to know of that story Hanuman might begin to despise his father. She wanted Hanuman to have the highest veneration for his father. In fact, Hanuman had such a reverence for his father that she did not like unclean water to pollute the noble Ganga of his affection and devotion for his father.

Here is an eternal truth that should be borne in mind always by all people. Parents should never accuse each other in front of their children and they should not speak of each other's faults or defects in the presence of their children, nor should they say anything about their mutual misunderstandings to their children. They should not reveal such things to their children even by a mistake. In case they reveal such things to their children the children will develop disregard and contempt for their parents.

The wheel of time continued to revolve. Hanuman passed from childhood to boyhood and from boyhood he entered the firmament of youth imperceptibly. The speed of Time's winged chariot is greater than ours. We remain behind caught in the coils of worldly events but Time leaving those events behind moves forward. Hanuman grew up to be a graceful young man of extraordinary attainments and accomplishments. He had acquired mastery over various arts and sciences. Anjana could not but be gay and delighted at the sight of her son. Pavananjay swelled with pride thinking of his son who was the very embodiment of nobility and ability.

* * * *

The kingdom of Lanka was prosperous. Lanka had become a vast empire since Ravan had captured many kingdoms and had subjugated them. Peace and prosperity prevailed all over

the empire. But Ravan was worried over a strange problem. King Varuna was like a thorn in his flesh. He thought so highly of himself that he desired to capture King Varuna and defeat him somehow or the other. Of course, Pavananjay had brought about a compromise between him and King Varuna to prevent the unnecessary death of countless innocent people. Yet, Ravan was unhappy because he could not subjugate an ordinary king like Varuna. This sting continued to agitate him. It was like a hammer-stroke upon his pride. In consequence, Ravan was waiting for a suitable opportunity to make a war against King Varuna and to subjugate him for ever.

It was night. There was silence everywhere. The whole city of Lanka was deep asleep. There was absolute silence but for the noise of the steps of the sentinels keeping guard around the palace. But Ravan could not get a wink of sleep. His dream of a vast empire had been defeated by Varuna's independence. He tried his best to keep off this thought but he could not. After thinking for a while, he stood up and then went to a corner of his bed chamber. He pressed with his toe a large stone that lay there. At once, the armed guard who was walking up and down outside the chamber came in and saluted him. Ravan ordered him to bring Kumbhakarna, Vibhishan and Indrajit. Soon, they hurried into Ravan's chamber. "Dear brother, what is the matter? Why have you sent for us at this time of the night?"

"What can I do? I have not been able to get a wink of sleep."

"What has happened?" Vibhishan asked eagerly.

"King Varun has made me sleepless...."

"Has he planned to invade Lanka?" Indrajit asked with an excited voice.

"No. No such thing has happened. But until I can humiliate that arrogant king, until I defeat and subjugate him I cannot get a wink of sleep," Ravan explained his problem to them.

"But now he is our friend and ally. What is it that we can do?" Vibhishan asked.

"Vibhishan ! Can a foe ever become a friend ? Our compromise was only a stratagem to get Khar and Dushan released." Ravan said looking towards Kumbhakarna.

"All right ! After having come to a compromise with him and after having proclaimed that he is our friend, if we make a war against him again the world will reproach us and say that we are uncivilized. That step will be a reproach on civilization itself."

Ravan, did not approve of Vibhishan's suggestion. Pausing a little he said, "That is why I am caught in a strange conflict, I am unable to see any way out of this conflict. You tell me what I should do now." Ravan spoke in great excitement.

All were deeply worried. They thought of the situation deeply but they could not think of any way out. "If King Ravan invades Varuna's kingdom it will be a reproach on Ravan's prestige and if he does not invade Varuna's territory it will be an impediment to his imperialistic sway." It was this thorn that was stinging Ravan's heart. What was to be done ?

A little later Indrajit said, "I have thought of a plan."

"What's your plan ?" Ravan asked him impatiently.

"We should make the false allegation against Varuna that he has broken the terms of the treaty of friendship and on that basis we should send a warning to him."

Indrajit's deceptive plan caused much agitation to Vibhishan but he was silent. King Ravan also knew Vibhishan's sense of fairness very well. But he liked Indrajit's deceptive plan. With the idea of putting an end to the discussion he said :

"Very well ! I will think about this plan. You also think about it. Since you have shared my worry I feel a little relieved and I will sleep well now."

After the three went away, Ravan lay down upon his bed. Indrajit began riding on the winged horse of imagination thinking of the ways and means to satisfy the sky-high ambitions of

his father, whereas Vibhishan who firmly believed in justice and fairplay did not like to adopt unjust and unfair methods to please Ravan. He knew very well that till now king Varuna had been absolutely loyal to the treaty of friendship and had been maintaining friendly relations with King Ravan. He thought that it was highly immoral and improper to stain his honour by making false allegations against him. Kumbhakarna did not have to think of the matter at all. That question never arose because so far as he was concerned, Ravan's command was tantamount to the command of the Paramatma.

The next day after carrying out the essential activities like the worship of the Paramatma, King Ravan sent for Indrajit. He held a discussion with him and then decided to make an allegation against King Varuna saying that his soldiers had committed aggression by trespassing into his territory and thus had broken the terms of the treaty of friendship. Ravan now felt a little pleased and happy. At once, Ravan sent a messenger with a warning to King Varuna.

The message read thus :

“King Varuna !

We made a treaty of friendship with you only on account of the mediation of Pavananjay, the son of King Prahlad and we have been respecting the terms of the treaty with meticulous care. But, of late, you have committed a breach of the treaty. From this, your evil intentions become evident. We fear that you have a false sense of your own heroism and that of your sons, and you have not hesitated to make your evil intentions evident thus but you must know that every thing has a limit. Day by day, our patience is being tested. Even now you have enough time to rectify your stance. If you do not desist from your evil actions and encroachments upon our territories we will be constrained to take proper steps against your unfriendly attitude.”

After having sent the messenger to King Varuna, Ravan sent for all his friends and allies ordering them to bring their armies with them. Again, Lanka began to echo with the noises

of war-like preparations. The preparations for the war were going on in full swing. The soldiers and warriors were full of spirit and enthusiasm. They were getting ready their weapons for the war.

The messenger soon reached the royal court of King Varuna. He saluted King Varuna and stood there,

“Dear sir ! Where have you come from ?”

“From Lanka !”

“We hope that our dear friend King Ravan is well. What message has he sent us. Kindly tell us.”

“How can you ask for king Ravan’s welfare after having been disloyal to him as a friend ?”

“Who has been disloyal to our friend ? What has angered him ?” King Varuna asked him eagerly.

“Oh king ! you ask yourself who has been disloyal.”

King Varuna glanced towards his sons Pundarik and Rajiv. They too were in deep thought wondering what the situation was.

“Oh King ! Do not pretend to be ignorant of what has been done. The King of Lanka has sensed your hypocrisy and artful policies. He has come to know of your ignoble policies, and your secret activities; and so, he sent a message to you.”

“Oh messenger ! What is it that you want to say ? Do you mean that we have broken the terms of the treaty of friendship and offended King Ravan ?” King Varuna became wild with rage.

“Yes. Oh king ! That is the truth....”

“False !..... Impossible ! This is undoubtedly a false allegation made against us with sinister motives !” King Varuna said furiously shouting.

“Oh King ! What is the use of shouting thus ? The King of Lanka has received secret information from his spies that your

soldiers have encroached upon his territories and are intent upon occupying them."

"He was greatly shocked to hear this and he made further enquiries and found that it was all true. He is greatly upset over your sinister moves and if you do not put an end to your questionable activities the King of Lanka will be compelled to launch an invasion against your kingdom."

"Absolutely baseless.... All concocted stories! Our soldiers would never have done such a thing!" Rajiv said making his view clear.

"Then, do you suggest that the spies of King Ravan have given him false information deliberately? Impossible! Such a thing cannot take place."

"Yes. Absolutely false! Someone has conveyed to him this concocted story to break our friendship."

"Now, what message do you wish to convey to the King of Lanka?"

"Our messenger will bring our message to the King of Lanka."

After the departure of the messenger, King Varuna held a prolonged discussion with his sons Pundarik and Rajiv and his Chief Minister. Then, he sent the following message to the King of Lanka.

"Dear Ravan, King of Lanka !

We received the message sent by you. The information you have received that we have encroached upon your territories is absolutely false and it has been concocted by some people with sinister motives. They have duped you to make some wrongful gain and have conveyed this message to you with the evil intention of breaking off the friendly relations that exist between us. Our soldiers have not encroached upon your territories; nor do we desire to break off our friendly relations with you

because the happiness and prosperity of the people of our kingdoms depend entirely on our friendly relations. So, we hope that you will not be misled by such false information given to you by those who have an axe to grind, in the matter and that you will not act in such a way as to break off our mutual amity."

Carrying this message King Varuna's messenger set off towards Lanka. Meanwhile King Varuna's sons became alert; and with farsightedness they took secret measures to safeguard the sovereignty of their territories and to defend their territories. They knew very well Ravan's ways and they were fully aware of Ravan's crooked and malicious policies.

King Varuna's messenger arrived at the court of Ravan, the King of Lanka. He saluted Ravan formally and then communicated to him King Varuna's message. After hearing the message all were still and silent for sometime. Vibhishan was greatly surprised because Ravan had carried out this plan without his knowledge. Vibhishan who was sensible and shrewd did not take much time to understand the situation. Ravan flared up with anger and said: "Go and tell your King Varuna that Ravan is not a naive child to be taken in by his buttered and smooth words. I know that thrift follows his fawning. His candied tongue may lick the absurd pomp of those who can be thus flattered and received, but Ravan is not made of such mettle. On the one hand he has sent his soldiers into our territories and on the other hand he is trying to delude us by his deceptive devices and tricks putting up a mean masquerade of pretended amity. I cannot bear with such trickery. If Varuna cannot realize his blunder we will make him realize his blunder on the battle-field."

"That means?"

"The punishment we intend to inflict upon King Varuna will be inflicted upon him in the battle-field," Indrajit said explaining Ravan's policy.

"Surely arrive at the battle field to witness the tremendous heroism of King Varuna and his sons who are invincible heroes.

But before that please remember a little the fate that befell your assistants Khar and Dushana."

And without saying anything further the messenger returned to Varunapuri, at once.

King Ravan gave commands to his army to get ready for the war. Khar and Dushana came from Pathal Lanka bringing with them their large armies. Sugriv also came to Lanka with his army. Many Vidyadhar kings came to Lanka with their armies and pitched their tents outside the city. Lanka began to echo with war-like preparations.

The Vidyadhar kings sent a message to Pavananjay on behalf of Ravan. As soon as they received the message Pavananjay and Manasveg made preparations to set off to Lanka with their army. Just then, Hanuman also came there. When he saw his father and his uncle getting ready to go to wars he said in a humble manner :

"Dear father ! When I am here it is not proper for you to go to the wars. Kindly permit me to lead our armies to the war."

"Dear son, a war is not a children's game. Moreover King Varuna and his two sons are warriors of extraordinary prowess and heroism. What are you, compared to them ? You are but a"

"Dear father you are saying all this thinking that I am but a boy. But in valour I am not inferior to anyone. You kindly allow me to go to the wars. Then, you will see your son's abilities and heroism as a warrior."

Manasveg was fully aware of Hanuman's invincible valour and immortal vigour. Therefore he did not object to Hanuman's desire to go to the war. In fact, he advised Pavananjay to permit Hanuman to go to the wars but somehow Anjanadevi came to know that Hanuman was planning to go to the wars. She was greatly agitated by the news and came running. She came and embraced Hanuman and said in a voice choked with emotion; "Dear son ! You are yet young to go to the wars. Dear child ! I cannot live even for a moment without you by my side"

“Mother dear ! Kindly do not get agitated. You must bestow your benedictions upon me as the mother of a hero. Do not worry at all. Your son will surely return victorious. Remember I am the mighty son of goddess Anjana.”

The tears streamed from Anjana’s eyes. Manasveg assured Anjana that Hanuman was invincible and reminded her of how by the fall of Hanuman a mighty mountain crumbled to pieces. He said to her, “Dear Anjana ! This is a golden opportunity for Hanuman. He will attain a tremendous victory and will achieve fame throughout the world as a hero of exceptional abilities.” At the end it was decided that Prahasit should be sent with Hanuman. Finally Anjana gave her silent consent.

This was enough. Lakhs of soldiers got ready with tremendous enthusiasm to go to the war under the command of Hanuman who shone resplendent like Bellona’s bridegroom. On an auspicious day, that Valour’s Minion set off to the wars leading a vast army. Anjanadevi decorated Hanuman’s forehead with the *Tilak* and bestowed upon him her choicest benedictions. The war-cries reverberated in the skies.

XXIX

THE CAPTURE OF VARUN

Even while Ravan's preparations for the war were going on, Hanuman arrived at Lanka with his large army. Seeing Hanuman from a distance Ravan was greatly delighted and elated. He went forward to receive Hanuman. Seeing Ravan coming forward Hanuman alighted from his chariot and accompanied by Prahasit, went forward to meet Ravan. Hanuman bowed to Ravan, the King of Lanka. Ravan, the King of Lanka, embraced Hanuman affectionately. Ravan felt that Hanuman's arrival was like the arrival of the goddess of fortune, to bestow upon him a splendid victory. Ravan observed Hanuman's face which was resplendent and his body which was beautiful, symmetrical, and adamant and at once realized that he was an extraordinary hero.

The court-priest recited some auspicious *shloka*. The bugles sounded and in response to the sounds of the bugles all the armies got ready to set off. The sky resounded with the cries of victory made by the countless warriors. Ravan's chariot set off ahead. Hanuman's chariot was just behind Ravan's chariot. Prahasit had undertaken the responsibility of driving Hanuman's chariot. Indrajit's chariot was speeding abreast of Hanuman's chariot, and behind them the chariots of Kumbhakarna, Meghavahan and Sugriv followed. The chariots were speeding ahead in the form of a garland. At the rear, there were the chariots of Khar and Dhushana.

They were followed by countless Vidyadhar kings, heroes and warriors on horses and elephants. There were also millions

of soldiers marching on foot. They were all marching towards Varunapuri. Camping at various places on the way, Ravan, the King of Lanka approached Varunapuri. King Varuna also had made extraordinary preparations for the war. Varuna's two mighty sons each superior to the other were intent upon inflicting upon Ravan an ignominious defeat; and making him lick the dust in utter humiliation and desperation. They were standing like towers, ready to fight like veritable gods of war. They were out to destroy Ravan's army. Their chief commander who was a mighty master of many kinds of magical and supernatural powers and who had mastered the way of using countless supernatural devices of destruction stood like a pillar of strength, looking forward to the opportunity of experiencing the delight of fighting, the only delight which he really enjoyed in his life.

Ravan pitched his camp at a distance of twenty-four miles from the battle-field. The sun was declining to the west. Ravan's armies comprising millions of warriors were burning with enthusiasm to show their mettle in warfare. After having completed his duties, Ravan invited to his tent all the Vidyadhar kings, princes and chief commanders and explained to them his plans for the first day's battle. He also suggested the battle-formations for the first day. Indrajit was appointed the supreme commander of the combined forces. Hanuman was appointed his lieutenant. After the session ended all went to sleep.

They woke early in the morning; and began to beat the battle-drums. All the armies took up their weapons; went into the battle-field; and took up the prescribed positions. Their enthusiasm was boundless. By the time the sun rose, all the armies except the emergency army of Kumbhakarna went into the battle-field and took up their positions according to the prescribed formations.

Prince Pundarik was commanding the forces of King Varuna. He stood in his chariot at the head of the army, carrying weapons. As he stood there, he was like a mountain peak, in stature and stability. Prince Rajiv who was a great master of

various kinds of extraordinary weapons, took up position in his chariot which stood near Prince Pundarik's chariot. Just opposite to them, there were the chariots of Indrajit and Meghavahan. Behind them, there stood the chariot of Prince Prasanna-kirti, of Mahendranagar with his ten thousand soldiers on horseback. Near him, Ravan's faithful commanders Khar and Dushana stood intent upon compelling their bitter enemies to lick the dust in the battle.

On the other side a little away, there stood Yogesh the chief commander of King Varuna with fifty thousand soldiers intent upon pouncing into the battle. Just opposite to him Hanuman whose face was radiant like the sun stood in command of fifty thousand soldiers.

The sun rose in all his splendour. Bugles sounded on both sides as an indication to commence the war. Indrajit offered a prayer to his deities and took up arms and began fighting. His first arrow went whistling through the air and passed close to Pundarik's temple with a swishing sound. In reply to this, Pundarik shot ten arrows in quick succession. Indrajit shot arrows and broke to pieces Pundarik's arrows. At the same time, he released twenty-five arrows confounding Pundarik and his chariot rushed ahead but Pundarik was not immature and inexpedient. He at once released ten arrows and stopped Indrajit's chariot from rushing forward. On another part of the battle-field Rajiv fought with tremendous ability and heroism and began to decimate the armies of Lanka. Each arrow shot by him took away the life of a soldier. Meghavahan went forward and tried to surround Rajiv but Rajiv not caring for his move shot arrows dexterously and broke off Meghavahan's bow. At once, Meghavahan took up another bow and he shot arrows wounding the horses of Rajiv's chariot. Khar and Dushana also came to assist him. They caused a tremendous shower of arrows but Rajiv remained unshaken in his position and encountered them with a tremendous heroism. He released ten arrows and shot off Khar's helmet and he released ten other arrows and cut Dushana's armour into pieces. At the same time, he shot twenty-five arrows in the

form of a garland and made Meghavana's horses lick the dust. Meghavan was forced to take shelter in Dushan's chariot.

Within the twinkling of an eye, Pundarik inflicted heavy casualties on Indrajit and King Varuna's army used every opportunity to decimate Ravan's armies. Even a few hours had not passed since the commencement of the war but within that short time many able warriors on the side of Ravan were killed. Pundarik led his army in a ferocious manner against Ravan's army and compelled it to retreat a distance of two miles. The morale of King Varuna's army was very high. Their spirit and enthusiasm rose like the sea-waves on the night of the full-moon day, whereas Ravan's army was in bitter despair.

In another part of the battle-field, Hanuman had fought against King Varuna's chief commander and inflicted upon him heavy casualties. He had struck terror into the chief commander's heart by virtue of his prowess. But when he saw Pundarik marching his army against Indrajit and the Rakshasa army retreating in fear and despair, he said to Prahasit :

"Please drive the chariot towards Pundarik."

"Not yet; let the first phase of the day pass. Wait a little."

There was only a little time left in the first phase of the day. Just then, Prahasit deliberately drove the chariot a little backwards. Yogesh the chief commander of Varuna was delighted to see this and he rushed forward with renewed confidence and courage. But as he came near, Prahasit made his chariot go round and round. At the same time Hanuman's chariot began circling around the chief commander's chariot. He inflicted heavy casualties upon him; broke to pieces his bow; wounded his horses and broke off the wheels of his chariot.

Soon after the first phase of the day was over, Prahasit drove Hanuman's chariot speedily towards Pundarik. Yogesh heaved a sigh of relief. Hanuman's chariot obstructed Pundarik's chariot; and stood stolid in the way like the Himalayas. Just then, with the purpose of confounding Hanuman, Pundarik caused a shower of arrows upon him. But was Hanuman inferior to him, in any way? He shot arrows and broke into pieces every arrow of Pundarik, and releasing ten arrows at a time.

broke Pundarik's bow. Pundarik, at once, took another bow and assumed a formidable posture. He seemed to be the veritable god of death. Infuriated by the humiliation he had suffered, he pounced upon Hanuman. He tried to drive back Hanuman's chariot. But Hanuman was a teacher of teachers; a master of masters. He recited *Mantras*; and began shooting extraordinary weapons. If he shot one arrow, it became countless arrows. On account of the rain of arrows falling around him, Pundarik could not even see Hanuman and Hanuman shot an exceptional kind of arrow after reciting a *Mantra*, aiming it at Pundarik. When the arrow hit Pundarik, he felt greatly confounded and just then Rajiv came to his rescue. He began to harass Hanuman. Just at this time, Prasannakirti, the Prince of Mahendrapur rushed forward; and joining Hanuman began fighting. Pundarik turned towards Prasannakirti. In the twinkling of an eye, Hanuman shot arrows and killed the horses of Rajiv's chariot. Rajiv leaped into another chariot; and excited by the fret of war, he attacked Hanuman.

Prahasit began his style. He took the chariot a little backwards. Rajiv delighted by this rushed forward. Prahasit allowed him to come forward; and after having induced Rajiv to come upto a certain place, Prahasit made his chariot go round and round. Hanuman surrounded Rajiv by releasing arrows with great dexterity. Rajiv thus confounded felt giddy for a few moments. When Pundarik saw Rajiv thus besieged, he had to leave his front and go to his rescue; but Prasannakirti, stopped him on the way; but he became powerless before Pundarik who shot exceptionally powerful arrows. Within a few moments, Pundarik cut off his metallic armour. When Pundarik tried to rush ahead, Indrajit stopped him. Like a blood-thirsty wolf, Pundarik pounced upon him. Indrajit had to retreat. But meanwhile, Hanuman killed the horses of Rajiv's chariot; and threw him into a state of indecisiveness. Rajiv at once, leaped to the ground; and began to encounter Hanuman's valour. Hanuman broke into pieces Rajiv's bow; and then after reciting the relevant *Mantra*, released the Nagastra against Rajiv and in consequence Rajiv was caught in the coils of countless terrible serpents. Hanuman seized him and put him in his chariot.

The soldiers of Ravan's army began to shout in elation. Pundarik became infuriated. His anger rose to the skies when he saw his brother captured by the enemies. King Varun's other sons, Sumangal, Swastik, and Vasav came to assist Pundarik. They were determined to capture Hanuman or to kill him. The second phase of the day was over. The soldiers of Ravan's army were full of admiration for Hanuman's heroism. Ravan who sat on his elephant Bhuvanankar and who was at a great distance beheld Hanuman's mastery of the arts of war and was immensely pleased with his success. Near him, there stood Sugriv, the valiant ready with his army. He too was greatly impressed by Hanuman's extraordinary heroism. Ravan by means of a wave of his hand suggested to Sugriv to go ahead. Accordingly, without delay Sugriv came near Hanuman and began to attack Pundarik's brothers, Sumangal, Swastik and Vasav. Sugriv had fought in many wars. He was an experienced warrior. Sumangal, Swastik and the others found it difficult to face him. They, unable to face him, ran behind him to extricate themselves from the situation. Sugriv leaving them behind rushed towards Pundarik. Hanuman had some rest. So Sugriv challenged Pundarik. A terrible fight broke out between Sugriv and Pundarik. Neither was inferior to the other in his mastery of the arts of warfare. In another part of the battle-field Varun's sons pounced upon Ravan's army and began decimating the enemy soldiers.

The third phase of the day was about to end but Pundarik and Sugriv were not prepared to acknowledge each other's superiority. Hanuman released against Pundarik twenty-five arrows in a chain and drew his attention towards himself. Sugriv like a hungry lion pounced upon Varuna's army and began to inflict upon them heavy calamities. The earth was flooded with blood.

Hanuman risking everything began to fight against Pundarik. Prahasit took the chariot so close to Pundarik's chariot that they could not shoot arrows at each other. Hanuman took up his mace. Pundarik also took up his mace. Both jumped to the ground and they began to fight with maces in a ferocious

manner. Hanuman fought so ably that Pundarik felt tired soon. Then, Hanuman cleverly pounced upon Pundarik and hit him with his mace. Pundarik began to lick the dust. Hanuman bound him to his chariot. There arose tremendous cries of elation in Ravan's army while a desperate commotion arose in Varuna's army.

Hearing that Hanuman captured Pundarik, King Varuna was infuriated. He marched into the battle-field with his invincible soldiers on elephants. Seeing that King Varuna was marching towards Hanuman, Ravan riding his elephant Bhuvanankar rushed towards him and stopped him on the way. He stood on his way like a mighty rock. A terrible fight broke out between Ravan and King Varuna.

The fourth phase of the day had begun. King Varuna on account of his incomparable valour confounded Ravan. Ravan, at once, recited *Mantras* to release divine weapons but Varuna also recited *Mantras* and rendered them powerless and ineffectual. Ravan was stupefied by Varuna's heroism and prowess. Ravan always admired valour and heroism and so he enjoyed fighting against King Varuna who was an invincible hero.

Ravan sent his elephant Bhuvanankar against Varuna's elephant. Both the elephants collided and grappled with each other. On account of their clashes the whole battle-field began to shake. Ravan who was an expert in deceptive arts leaped on to the back of Varuna's elephant. Even before Varuna could think of anything Ravan captured him. The game ended. Ravan's flag began to flutter on the elephant of King Varuna. The battle ended. There appeared a commotion everywhere. The soldiers of Ravan's army were overwhelmed with delight and elation. Confusion arose among the soldiers of King Varuna. Ravan, the King of Lanka made King Varuna his captive and brought him to his camp. The Sun-god was declining to the west and fast disappearing.

The next day in the same locale, at an auspicious time Ravan planned and held his court. All the kings, princes and

warriors sat in their places. He offered Hanuman a seat of dignity close to him.

The court began its activities. King Varuna and his sons were produced in the court. When Ravan stood up, there was silence everywhere. He began to speak in a dignified manner;

“Honoured kings, princes and potentates and dear warriors! You have defeated King Varuna, an invincible hero and you have attained this immortal glory. I heartily congratulate you upon your tremendous victory. This victory has filled my heart with joy and I feel greatly elated but the honour of having brought victory goes to Hanuman, the son of Pavananjay. No one can help being stupefied by his tremendous heroism, his immortal valour and his incomparable mastery of the arts of war. Therefore on your behalf and on behalf of all the citizens of Lanka I congratulate him upon his historic achievement.”

Suddenly, thousands of eyes fell upon Hanuman. King Varuna, Pundarik and Rajiv also looked at Hanuman with fixed eyes. They understood only then that the valiant warrior was none other than Hanuman, the son of Pavananjay. All were greatly happy and delighted to see him.

At this point, Hanuman stood up from his seat and said in a grateful manner, “Oh king! the credit of this victory is not entirely mine. It is to be shared by all of us. It is not my victory; it is our victory. We have achieved this victory by our team-spirit and your able and stable leadership. At the same time, a part of the credit also goes to my honoured uncle Prahasit; without his help I could not have done anything.”

The cry of victory issued by Hanuman reverberated in the court.

A little later, Ravan, the King of Lanka continued his speech;

“Just as all of you deserve honour and congratulations the supremely heroic King Varuna and his heroic sons also

deserve honour and congratulations. I am really moved by their incomparable heroism and valour. I do not desire the Kingdom of Varuna nor did I invade his kingdom with that purpose. I hereby restore his kingdom to him."

The noise of the clapping of hands and the cries of victory reverberated in the sky. The atmosphere was pervaded with peace and happiness. King Varuna and his sons were at once released and they were offered seats of dignity on which they sat.

King Varuna entreated the King of Lanka to visit his palace in Varunapuri and to stay there for a few days. Ravan complied with his request. King Ravan entered Varunapuri with grandeur and eclat. King Varuna extended a magnificent reception to Ravan and others.

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